

JOHN LELAND D.D.

J. Hall sculp.



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THE ADVANTAGE AND NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION,

SHEWN FROM THE

STATE OF RELIGION IN THE ANTIENT HEATHEN WORLD:

ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO

THE KNOWLEDGE AND WORSHIP OF THE ONE TRUE GOD:

A RULE OF MORAL DUTY:

AND

A STATE OF FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE ON NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY JOHN LELAND, D. D.

AUTHOR OF THE VIEW OF THE DEISTICAL WRITERS, &c.

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M DCC LXIV.

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TO THE

KING.

Moſt Gracious SOVEREIGN!

THE following Treatiſe, which is deſigned to ſhew the advantages we enjoy by the Goſpel Revelation, is with great Humility addreſſed to Your Sacred MAJESTY. To this the author was encouraged by the favourable notice Your MAJESTY, when PRINCE OF WALES, was pleaſed to take of a book he formerly publiſhed with an intention to ſerve the Chriſtian cauſe, and which You ſo far honoured with Your princely approbation, as to ſend a conſiderable number of them to America, at Your own expence. So early a proof of Your MAJESTY's zeal for Chriſtianity afforded pleaſing proſpects, that when You ſhould aſcend the throne of Your anceſtors, You would make religion the object of Your royal care,

and both patronize it by Your authority, and adorn it by Your example.

The Divine Providence has now placed Your MAJESTY at the head of one of the moſt powerful and flouriſhing nations in the world, and put it in Your power to give illuſtrious proofs of Your concern for the honour of God, and Your regard to the happineſs of mankind, by promoting the valuable intereſts of piety, virtue, and uſeful learning; which is the moſt likely way to draw down a bleſſing from heaven upon Your MAJESTY's Perſon and government, and to advance and ſecure the true glory and proſperity of Your people.

When a KING who has no earthly ſuperior, preſerves a juſt ſenſe of his own ſubjection to the KING OF KINGS, and whilſt He receives the homage of his ſubjects who are his fellow-creatures, is himſelf careful with an unfeigned devotion to pay his duty to the GREAT CREATOR AND LORD OF ALL, to whom He muſt be accountable for his conduct; when He maintains a purity and regularity of manners amidſt the moſt ſpecious allurements of a tempting

tempting world; this forms a character which derives a glory to the greateſt monarch, far ſuperior to all the ſplendors of royal magnificence.

It is a thing which cannot reaſonably be denied, that RELIGION, rightly underſtood and practiſed, ſtrengthens the ſacred ties between SOVEREIGNS and their SUBJECTS. It tends to render KINGS juſt and equal in their adminiſtrations, the FATHERS of their people, and the GUARDIANS of their liberties; and to render the people *loyal* and *obedient*, ready with the greateſt fidelity and chearfulneſs to yield all due ſubjection and allegiance; and at the ſame time it has a manifeſt tendency to ſpread good order and harmony, and to promote the practice of thoſe virtues which have the greateſt influence on public as well as private happineſs.

That this may be the bleſſing of Your MAJESTY, and theſe nations:—That wiſdom and righteouſneſs may be the ſtability of Your throne, and that Your MAJESTY may long reign in the hearts of a happy and united people:—That the knowledge and practice

of

of true vital Chriſtianity may flouriſh under Your auſpicious government:——And that theſe nations may continue in the poſſeſſion and due improvement of their civil and religious privileges, under PRINCES of Your MAJESTY's illuſtrious LINE to the lateſt generations; is the ardent prayer of all Your MAJESTY's faithful ſubjects, and in a particular manner of,

May it pleaſe Your MAJESTY,

Your MAJESTY's

moſt dutiful,

moſt obedient

and moſt devoted

Subject and Servant,

Dublin, 25th. Dec. 1763.

John Leland.

PREFACE.

AS I am fully perſuaded that the Chriſtian Revelation, conſidering the excellency of its doctrines, the purity of its precepts, and the power of thoſe motives whereby the practice of them is enforced, and eſpecially its exceeding great and precious promiſes, and the glorious and ſublime hopes which good men are thereby raiſed unto, is one of the choiceſt gifts of heaven to mankind, ſo I think no man can be better employed than in endeavouring to diſplay its advantages to the world, and defend it againſt the oppoſition of gainſayers. This is what I have honeſtly intended in ſeveral books formerly publiſhed on that ſubject *; and which, I truſt, have not been altogether without their uſe. It was however neither my intention nor inclination, conſidering my years and growing infirmities, to engage any farther in this kind of ſervice. But ſome perſons †, to whoſe judgment and authority I owe great deference, urged me ſome time ago to review the books I had written, and out of them to form a treatiſe in which the arguments in favour of Revelation might be digeſted into a regular ſeries, and conſidered both ſeparately and in their

* Againſt Morgan, Tindal, Chriſtianity not founded on Argument, &c. &c.

† Late Lord Biſhop of London, Dr. Sherlock; Dr. Wilſon, Prebendary of Weſtminſter; and others.

joint

joint connection and harmony, together with a refutation of the principal objections. And that to make this the eaſier I might freely make uſe of my own ſentiments and expreſſions formerly publiſhed, and tranſcribe them into this new work. Some progreſs was made in this deſign, but after a while it was laid aſide. For I could not ſatisfy myſelf to put a work upon the public, which ſhould be little more than an extract or abridgment of what I had before publiſhed, though in another form. As this however occaſioned my turning my thoughts again to the controverſy between the Chriſtians and Deiſts, it gave riſe to the following treatiſe. I found, upon conſidering this ſubject, that the ableſt of thoſe who have attempted to maintain the deiſtical cauſe in a way of reaſon and argument (for I do not ſpeak of thoſe who have contented themſelves with ſome ill-placed jeſt and ridicule, and with repeating ſtale and trifling objections which have been frequently anſwered and expoſed) have placed their chief ſtrength in aſſerting the abſolute ſufficiency of natural reaſon, left merely to its own force, without any higher aſſiſtance, to anſwer all the purpoſes of religion and happineſs. They maintain that even the bulk of mankind need no other or better guide; and particularly, that the common reaſon implanted in all men does of itſelf make the cleareſt diſcoveries of the unity, perfections, and attributes of God, of his providence and government of the world, of the whole of moral duty in its juſt extent, and of a future ſtate of retributions: that theſe which are the main articles in which all religion principally conſiſts, are naturally known to all mankind; ſo that an extraordinary Revelation from God is perfectly needleſs: and therefore we may juſtly conclude, that no ſuch Revelation was ever

given, ſince in that caſe it could anſwer no valuable end at all. This indeed would not follow. For if we ſhould allow that thoſe main articles of what is uſually called Natural Religion are what all men are able clearly to diſcern of themſelves, by their own natural light, without inſtruction, yet ſince all that make proper reflections upon their own ſtate muſt be conſcious that they have in many inſtances tranſgreſſed the law of God, and thereby expoſed themſelves to his juſt diſpleaſure, they might ſtill ſtand in great need of a Divine Revelation, to inſtruct them upon what terms he is willing to reſtore his offending creatures to his grace and favour, and how far he will think fit to reward their ſincere though imperfect obedience. In this view a Revelation from God, declaring the methods of his wiſdom and love for our recovery, and his gracious purpoſes towards penitent returning ſinners, and publiſhing the glad tidings of pardon and ſalvation upon ſuch terms as he ſeeth fit to appoint and require, would be an advantage we cannot be ſufficiently thankful for. But if beſides this, it can be made to appear, that mankind ſtand in great need of Divine Revelation to guide and inſtruct them aright even in the main articles of what is uſually called Natural Religion, the cauſe of Deiſm, as far as it can be formed into a conſiſtent ſyſtem, excluſive of all Revelation, falls to the ground. I am very ſenſible that they who take upon them the character of Deiſts, are far from being agreed in thoſe articles of religion, the clearneſs of which, when arguing againſt the neceſſity or uſefulneſs of Divine Revelation, they affect mightily to extol: and that there is too much reaſon to think, that one of the principal ſources of thoſe prejudices many of them have entertained againſt the Chriſtian Reve-

lation is its ſetting thoſe principles, and their juſt and natural conſequences, in too clear and ſtrong a light. But ſince, the better to carry on their attacks againſt revealed Religion, they put on an appearance of believing both the neceſſity and importance of thoſe principles, and their being univerſally obvious to all mankind, even to them that never had the benefit of Divine Revelation; this led me to make an enquiry into the ſtate of Religion in the antient Heathen world, eſpecially in thoſe nations which are accounted to have been the moſt learned and civilized, and among whom there were many perſons that made the higheſt pretenſions to learning and philoſophy. This enquiry coſt me a laborious ſearch. For though this ſubject has been treated of by others, and I have endeavoured to profit by their labours, yet I did not think proper to rely entirely upon them, but, as far as I was able, examined every thing myſelf; and where, in a few inſtances, I had not an opportunity of conſulting the originals, but depended upon the quotations made by others, I have referred the reader to the authors from whom I took them.

The reſult of my enquiries is contained in the following work; in which I firſt propoſe to repreſent the ſtate of religion in the Gentile world, with reſpect to that which lies at the foundation of all religion, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, in oppoſition to idolatry and polytheiſm. 2dly, To conſider what notions they had of moral duty, taken in its juſt extent: a thing of the higheſt importance to mankind. 3dly, To take a view of the notions which obtained among them of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments; which is alſo a point of vaſt conſequence

to

to the cauſe of religion and virtue in the world. Under theſe ſeveral heads I do not pretend to argue from ſpeculative hypotheſes concerning the ſuppoſed powers of human nature; or to affirm that it is not poſſible for any man, by the mere force of his own reaſon, to attain to any rational perſuaſion of theſe things; but I proceed upon fact and experience, which will help us to form the trueſt judgment in this matter, and will ſhew us what we are to expect from human reaſon, if left merely to its own unaſſiſted force, in the preſent ſtate of mankind. The enquiry is carried on to the time of our Saviour's coming, and the iſſue of my reſearches, as far as my own particular judgment and perſuaſion is concerned, has been to produce in me a full conviction of the great need mankind ſtood in of an extraordinary Divine Revelation, even with regard to thoſe that are accounted the cleareſt as well as the moſt important articles of what is uſually called Natural Religion; and to inſpire me with the higheſt thankfulneſs to God for the Goſpel Revelation, which has ſet theſe things in the moſt glorious light. This is what I have endeavoured to ſhew; and if what I ſhall offer on thoſe heads can be any way inſtrumental to excite the ſame ſentiments and affections in others, and to heighten their eſteem for the Chriſtian Revelation as contained in the Holy Scriptures, and to make them more careful to improve it to the excellent purpoſes for which it was manifeſtly deſigned, I ſhall not grudge the pains I have taken, but ſhall count myſelf happier than any worldly advantages could make me.

This work has grown upon my hands much beyond my original intention. But when I was once engaged upon this ſubject,

I was not willing to treat it in a ſlight and ſuperficial manner; and yet ſeveral things are laid aſide which I had prepared, and which would have enlarged it ſtill more. The materials of the firſt part were alone ſufficient to fill a large volume; and therefore I deſigned to publiſh it ſeparately. But ſome judicious friends were of opinion, that it would be better to lay the whole before the public in one view. This I have ventured to do, voluminous as it is, and hope the importance of the ſubject, as well as the great extent of it, will be admitted as an apology. To the whole is prefixed a Preliminary Diſcourſe on Natural and Revealed Religion, which I believe will not be thought an improper Introduction to a work of this nature.

In treating of the ſubject propoſed, I have ſometimes found myſelf obliged to differ from perſons for whoſe learning and judgment I have a great regard. And though I am not conſcious to myſelf of having made any wilful miſrepreſentations of things, yet it is very probable that in the courſe of ſo long a work I have committed miſtakes, which will need the indulgence of the reader.

As a book of this kind muſt unavoidably contain a great number of quotations, I have not thought it neceſſary in every inſtance to give the words in the original language, though I have frequently done ſo; but have, to the beſt of my ability, always given a faithful account of their ſenſe. Great care has been taken to make the references to the quotations particular and exact, that any man who pleaſes may the more eaſily have it in his power to examine and compare them.

After

After I had brought the following work near to a concluſion, I met with a book written by the late learned Dr. Archibald Campbel, profeſſor of divinity and eccleſiaſtical hiſtory in the univerſity of St. Andrews, which I had not ſeen before, intituled, "The Neceſſity of Revelation: or, an Enquiry into the extent of "Human Powers with reſpect to Matters of Religion; eſpecially "thoſe two fundamental articles, the Being of God, and the "Immortality of the Soul." Publiſhed in 1739. As the deſign of this treatiſe ſeemed in ſome meaſure to coincide with what I had in view, I read it over with great care, and muſt do him the juſtice to ſay, that he has treated his ſubject with great learning and diligence. But the method he makes uſe of is ſo different from that which I have purſued, that the one does not interfere with the other; nor has it occaſioned any alteration in the plan which I had formed. I have however in ſeveral places added marginal notes referring to the Doctor's book, either where I thought it contained a fuller illuſtration of what I have more briefly hinted at, or where, as ſometimes has been the caſe, I happened to differ from that learned writer.

Not to detain the reader any longer, the plan of the following work is briefly this:

That there was an original Revelation communicated to mankind in the earlieſt ages, for leading them to the knowledge of God and Religion, ſome veſtiges of which continued long among the nations: that in proceſs of time, through the negligence and corruption of mankind, Religion in it main articles, and particularly in what related to the knowledge and worſhip of the One

true

true God, became in a great meaſure defaced, and overwhelmed with the groſſeſt ſuperſtitions and idolatries: that this was the ſtate of things even in the moſt polite and civilized nations, and all the aids of learning and philoſophy were ineffectual and vain: that therefore there was great need of a new Divine Revelation from heaven, to ſet the great principles of religion in the moſt clear and convincing light, and to enforce them upon mankind by a Divine authority in a manner ſuited to their vaſt importance: that accordingly it pleaſed God to do this by the Chriſtian Revelation, which was fitted and deſigned to be publiſhed to all mankind, and was accompanied with all the evidences of a Divine original which were proper to procure its reception in the world: that to prepare the way for this, there had been an extraordinary Revelation ſeveral ages before, which though immediately promulgated to a particular people, was in ſeveral reſpects of uſe to other nations, for checking the progreſs of idolatry and polytheiſm, and preſerving the knowledge and worſhip of the One true God in the world, when it ſeemed in danger of being extinguiſhed.

From all which it appears, that God never left himſelf without witneſs among men: that his diſpenſations towards mankind have been conducted with great wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs: and that we, who by the favour of God enjoy the benefit of the laſt and moſt perfect Revelation of the Divine Will which was ever made to mankind, are under the higheſt obligations to receive it with the profoundeſt veneration, with the moſt unfeigned gratitude and thankful admiration of the Divine Goodneſs, and to endeavour to make the beſt uſe and improvement of it.

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of the things of nature, and parts of the univerſe, and of whatſoever was uſeful to mankind. The qualities and affections of the mind, and accidents of life, and even evil qualities and accidents were deified, and had divine honours rendered to them. The moſt refined Pagans agreed, according to Dr. Cudworth, in crumbling the Deity into ſeveral parts, and multiplying it into many Gods. They ſuppoſed God to be in a manner all things, and therefore to be worſhipped in every thing. Divine honours were paid to evil beings acknowledged to be ſuch. The Egyptian idolatry conſidered. p. 140

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Some farther conſiderations to ſhew how little was to be expected from the philoſophers for recovering the Pagans from their polytheiſm and idolatry. They referred the people for inſtruction in divine matters to the oracles, which were managed by the prieſts. This ſhewn particularly concerning Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics. It was an univerſal maxim among them, That it was the duty of every wiſe and good man to conform to the religion of his country. And not only did they worſhip the gods of their reſpective countries, according to the eſtabliſhed rites, and exhort others to do ſo, but when they themſelves took upon them the character of legiſlators, and drew up plans of laws and of the beſt forms of government, not the worſhip of the one true God, but polytheiſm, was the religion they propoſed to eſtabliſh. p. 349

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Pagans

Pagans in other nations ridiculed. Their plea for idolatry and image-worſhip as neceſſary to keep the people from falling into irreligion and atheiſm. Some of the moſt refined philoſophers were againſt any external worſhip of the ſupreme God. p. 364

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AN

AN INTRODUCTORY

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Natural and Revealed Religion.

RELIGION, in its true notion, neceſſarily ſuppoſes and includes an intercourſe between God and Man: *i. e.* on God's part diſcoveries and manifeſtations of himſelf and his perfections, and of his will with regard to the duties he requireth: and on man's part a capacity and readineſs to receive and improve thoſe diſcoveries, and to conform to all the ſignifications of the divine will. For it is an undeniable principle, that whatſoever plainly appeareth to be the mind and will of God, in whatever way we come to know it, we are indiſpenſably obliged to obſerve. And there are two ways by which God may be ſuppoſed to manifeſt himſelf and his will to mankind, by his Works and by his Word.

Accordingly Religion has been uſually diſtributed into Natural and Revealed. Theſe are not two eſſentially different religions, much leſs contrary or contradictory to one another: for as both are ſuppoſed to come from God, who is truth itſelf, there muſt be a harmony between them: nor yet are they entirely the ſame,

and only differing in the manner of communication. For tho' all true Revealed Religion muſt be really conſiſtent with, and contain nothing contrary to, the clear light of Nature and Reaſon, yet it may diſcover and reveal ſeveral things relating to Truth and Duty, which that Light, if left to itſelf, could not have diſcovered at all, or not with ſufficient clearneſs and certainty. Theſe, therefore, are not to be ſet in oppoſition: nor is the one of them deſigned to exclude the other. And, in fact, God manifeſted himſelf in both theſe ways from the beginning; ſo that it may, with the greateſt juſtneſs and propriety, be ſaid, that he hath never left himſelf without witneſs among men. Happy would it have been for them, if they had been careful to make a right uſe and improvement of thoſe diſcoveries!

SECT.

SECT. I.

Of Natural Religion.

THE word Natural Religion has been taken in various acceptations. Some, by Natural Religion, underſtand every thing in religion, with regard to truth and duty, which, when once diſcovered, may be clearly ſhewn to have a real foundation in the nature and relations of things, and which unprejudiced reaſon will approve, when fairly propoſed and ſet in a proper light. And accordingly very fair and goodly ſchemes of Natural Religion have been drawn up by Chriſtian Philoſophers and Divines, in which they have comprehended a conſiderable part of what is contained in the Scripture Revelation: *e. g.* the important truths and principles relating to the exiſtence, the unity, the perfections, and attributes of God, his governing providence and moral adminiſtration, the worſhip that is due to him, the law that is given to mankind, or the whole of moral duty in its juſt extent as relating to God, our neighbours, and ourſelves, the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate, and other articles nearly connected with theſe, or dependent upon them. And after having taken great pains to ſhew that all this is perfectly agreeable to ſound reaſon, and founded in the nature of things, they have honoured the whole with the name of Natural Religion. It cannot be denied, that it is a real and great ſervice to Religion, to ſhew that the main principles and duties of it are what right reaſon muſt approve. And no ſmall praiſe is certainly due to thoſe,

who have ſet themſelves to demonſtrate this with great clearneſs and force of argument.

But it does not follow, that becauſe theſe things, when once clearly diſcovered, may be proved to be agreeable to reaſon, and to have a real foundation in the nature of things, that therefore Reaſon alone, in the preſent ſtate of mankind, if left to itſelf, without higher aſſiſtance, would merely, by its own force, have diſcovered all theſe things with their genuine conſequences, and have applied them to their proper uſes, for directing men in the true knowledge and practice of Religion. It is a juſt obſervation of that great man Mr. Locke, That "a great many things which "we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles (and "are notions grown familiar, and, as it were, natural to us under "the Goſpel) we take for unqueſtionable truths, and eaſily de-"monſtrable, without conſidering how long we might have been "in doubt or ignorance of them, had Revelation been ſilent (*a*)". And he had ſaid before, That "every one may obſerve a great "many truths, which he receives at firſt from others, and readily "affirms to be conſonant to reaſon, which he would have found "it hard, and perhaps beyond his ſtrength, to have diſcovered "himſelf. Native and original truth is not ſo eaſily wrought out "of the mine, as we who have it ready dug and faſhioned to our "hands, are apt to imagine (*b*)". To the ſame purpoſe the learned Dr. Clarke obſerves, That "it is one thing to ſee, that "theſe rules of life, which are beforehand plainly and particularly

(*a*) Locke's Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity, in his works, vol. II. p. 535. ed. 3.
(*b*) Ibid. p. 532.

"laid

" laid before us, are perfectly agreeable to reaſon, and another " thing to find out theſe rules merely by the light of reaſon, with- " out their having been firſt any otherwiſe made known (*c*)." Accordingly ſome able and ſtrenuous aſſerters of Natural Religion or the law of nature, though they contend that it is founded in the nature of things, and agreeable to right reaſon, yet derive the original promulgation of it from divine Revelation. Puffendorf obſerves, That " it is very probable that God taught the firſt men " the chief heads of natural law, which were afterwards preſerved " and ſpread among their deſcendants by means of education and " cuſtom: yet this does not hinder, but that the knowledge of " theſe laws may be called natural, inaſmuch as the truth and " certainty of them may be diſcovered in a way of reaſoning, and " in the uſe of that reaſon which is natural to all men." Puffend. De Jure Nat. et Gent. lib. II. c. iii. ſect. 20. According to this account, Natural Religion or the law of nature is not ſo called becauſe it was originally diſcovered by natural Reaſon, but becauſe, when once made known, it is what the reaſon of mankind, duly exerciſed, approves, as founded in truth and nature.

Natural Religion, in the ſenſe now explained, is very conſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of an extraordinary divine Revelation, both to diſcover and promulgate it at firſt, and to re-eſtabliſh and confirm it, when, through the corruption of mankind, the important principles and duties of it were fallen into ſuch darkneſs and obſcurity, and ſo confounded with pernicious errors and obſcure

(*c*) Dr. Clarke's Diſcourſe on Nat. and Rev. Religion, propoſition vii. p. 313. edit. 7.

mixtures,

mixtures, that there needed an extraordinary aſſiſtance to recover men to the right knowledge and practice of it.

There are others who take Natural Religion in a ſenſe which is abſolutely excluſive of all extraordinary Revelation, and in direct oppoſition to it. By Natural Religion they underſtand that Religion which men diſcover in the ſole exerciſe of their natural faculties and powers, without any other or higher aſſiſtance. And they diſcard all pretences to extraordinary Revelation, as the effects of enthuſiaſm or impoſture. It is in this ſenſe, that thoſe who call themſelves Deiſts underſtand Natural Religion, which they highly extol as the only true Religion, the only diſcovery of truth and duty which can be ſafely depended upon; and which comprehends the whole of what is neceſſary to be known and done, in order to the obtaining the favour of God, and attaining true happineſs. But they who take Natural Religion in this ſenſe are not entirely agreed in their ſcheme.

The ableſt advocates for Natural Religion, as oppoſed to Revelation, aſſert it to be perfectly clear and obvious to the whole human race, and that it is what all men have a natural knowledge of. They argue, that ſince Religion equally concerneth all mankind, the wiſdom and goodneſs of God require that it ſhould be actually known to all. That ſince God has given the brutes natural inſtincts, which guide them certainly and infallibly to anſwer the proper end of their being, much more muſt it be ſuppoſed that he hath furniſhed all men with infallible means to direct them to Religion and Happineſs. Thus it is that Lord Herbert frequently argues; and on this foundation it is that he aſſerts, that

God hath imprinted on the minds of all men innate ideas of the main principles of Religion and Morality. And Dr. Tindal frequently repreſents it, as if there was a clear univerſal light ſhining into the minds of all men, and diſcovering to them the whole of what is neceſſary for them to know, believe, and practiſe; and which cannot be made clearer to any man by an external extraordinary Revelation, than it is naturally to all men without it. This is the principle which lies at the foundation of his celebrated book, intituled, "Chriſtianity as old as the Creation," and which runs through the whole of that boaſted performance. And it is, indeed, the only principle on which the ſcheme of thoſe gentlemen, who pretend that an extraordinary Revelation is abſolutely needleſs and uſeleſs, can be conſiſtently ſupported. This laſt mentioned author often talks as if what is called the law, or Religion of Nature, was a perfect ſcheme of Religion and Morality, fairly drawn on the mind and heart of every man, in ſuch a manner, that it is not poſſible for any man to miſtake it. And he carries it ſo far as to affirm, that even the moſt illiterate of the human race, and who cannot ſo much as read in their mother tongue, have naturally and neceſſarily a clear and intimate perception of the whole of Religion and their duty. And it will be eaſily owned, that there is no need of an extraordinary Revelation to teach men what they all naturally and neceſſarily know. Nor, indeed, upon that ſuppoſition, is there the leaſt need of inſtructions of any kind, whether by word or writing: and the beſt way would be (as this gentleman himſelf ſometimes intimates) to leave all men entirely to themſelves, and to the pure ſimple dictates of nature. This way of talking may, perhaps, appear fair and plauſible

ble in ſpeculation. It ſeems to make a beautiful repreſentation of the dignity of our ſpecies, and of the univerſal goodneſs of God to the whole human race. But, when brought to the teſt of fact and experience, it appears to be a viſionary ſcheme, no way anſwering to the truth and reality of the caſe in the preſent ſtate of human nature. And one would be apt to wonder, how ſuch a repreſentation could be made to paſs upon any man, that has the leaſt knowledge of the world, or of the hiſtory of mankind. It ſuppoſes Religion, in its true nature and in its juſt extent, to be naturally known to all men; ſo that they cannot miſtake it: and yet nothing is more certain and undeniable, from the hiſtory of mankind in all ages, than that they have miſtaken it in its important principles and obligations: and that, in order to their having a right ſenſe and diſcernment of thoſe principles and obligations, they ſtand in great need of particular inſtruction and information. It is evident in fact, that where no care is taken to inſtruct men, they have ſcarce any notion of Religion at all, but are ſunk into the groſſeſt ignorance and barbariſm: and accordingly the wiſeſt men in all ages have been ſenſible of the great advantage and neceſſity of education and inſtruction. Plutarch, in his treatiſe De liberis educand. goes ſo far as to affirm, that "Nature, without "learning or inſtruction, is a blind thing;" ἡ μὲν φύσις ἄνευ μαθήσεως τυφλὸν (*d*). And, in his treatiſe De Auditione, he ſays, "Vice can have acceſs to the ſoul through many parts of the "body, but Virtue can lay hold of a young man only by his "ears (*e*)," by which he receives inſtruction. Plato, in his ſixth

(*d*) Plutarch Oper. Tome ii. p. 2. B. Edit. Francof. 1620.
(*e*) Ibid. p. 38. A.

book

book of laws, after having ſaid, that man, if, with a good natural diſpoſition, he happens to have the advantage of right inſtruction and education, becomes a moſt divine and gentle animal, adds, that, if he be not ſufficiently or properly educated, he is the wildeſt and moſt untractable of all earthly animals, ἀγριώταλον ποσὰ φύει γῆ (*f*). The philoſophers frequently complain of the ignorance and ſtupidity of the generality of mankind: and this even when they ſpeak of the people of Athens and Rome, who were undoubtedly the moſt knowing and civilized among the heathen nations. And they would certainly have thought it a very ſtrange hypotheſis to ſuppoſe, that every man, even the meaneſt of the vulgar, is naturally ſo knowing in religion and morals, as to ſtand in no need of farther inſtruction either from God or Man (*g*).

Senſible of the inconveniencies of this ſcheme, others, by Natural Religion, underſtand not merely that which is naturally and neceſſarily known to all men, but that which Reaſon, duly exerciſed and improved, is able, by its own natural force, to diſcover, without the aſſiſtance of extraordinary Revelation. And as to this, it is a queſtion not eaſy to be reſolved, what is the utmoſt poſſibility of human reaſon, or how far our natural faculties, without any higher aſſiſtance, may poſſibly carry us, when raiſed to the higheſt degree of improvement of which they are naturally capable. Nor is it a queſtion of much uſe: ſince there are many

(*f*) Plat. Oper. p. 619. D. Edit. Ficin. Lugd. 1590.

(*g*) I have elſewhere more largely ſhewn the abſurdity of this ſcheme. *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, vol. I. eſpecially chap. v. See alſo the View of the Deiſtical Writers, vol. I. p. 49, et ſeq. Edit. 3.

things, which cannot be ſaid to be abſolutely above the reach of human capacity, which yet very few of the human race would ever come to know without particular information. The preſent queſtion, as far as Natural Religion is concerned in it, is, how far the bulk of mankind, taking them as they are in the preſent ſtate of the world, and of human nature, immerſed in fleſh and ſenſe, with all their appetites and paſſions about them, and amidſt the many avocations, buſineſſes, and cares in which they are involved, can ordinarily arrive in matters of Religion, by the mere force of their own natural powers, without any farther aſſiſtance or inſtruction: If we ſhould ſuppoſe that ſome perſons of ſtrong reaſon and extraordinary judgment and ſagacity, were capable, by the mere force of their own reaſon and ſtudious reſearches, to make out for themſelves a ſyſtem of Religion and Morals in all its main principles and duties, yet this would not reach the caſe of the generality of mankind, who have neither capacity, nor leiſure, nor inclination for profound enquiries. Nor could theſe wiſe men pretend to a ſufficient authority for impoſing their own ſentiments as laws to mankind. Or, if the people ſhould be brought to pay an implicit regard to their dictates, here would a way be opened for what thoſe gentlemen, who ſet up for the Patrons of Natural Religion in oppoſition to Revelation, ſo much dread, prieſtcraft, and the impoſitions of deſigning men (*b*).

But

(*b*) It may not be amiſs here to produce the acknowledgment of an ingenious author, who cannot be ſuſpected of being prejudiced in favour of Revelation, and has taken pains to convince the world of the contrary. "They," ſaith he, "who "would judge uprightly of the ſtrength of human reaſon in matters of morality "and religion, under the preſent corrupt and degenerate ſtate of mankind, ought "to take their eſtimate from thoſe parts of the world, which never had the benefit "of

But without entering into a nice ſpeculative diſquiſition, concerning the powers and abilities of human reaſon in matters of Religion, independent of all Revelation, the ſureſt and plaineſt way of judging is from fact and experience. It is therefore of great moment, for the deciſion of this point, to enquire what it is that human reaſon hath actually done this way, when left merely to its own force, without any extraordinary aſſiſtance (*i*). And this

" of Revelation: and this, perhaps, may make them leſs conceited of themſelves, " and more thankful to God for the light of the Goſpel." He aſks, " If the Reli- " gion of nature, under the preſent depravity and corruption of mankind, was writ- " ten with ſufficient ſtrength and clearneſs upon every man's heart, why might not " a Chineſe or Indian draw up as good a ſyſtem of Natural Religion as a Chriſtian, " and why have we never met with any ſuch?" And he adds, " Let us take Con- " fucius, Zoroaſter, Plato, Socrates, or the greateſt moraliſt that ever lived without " the light of Revelation, and it will appear, that their beſt ſyſtems of morality " were intermixed and blended with much ſuperſtition, and ſo many groſs abſurdi- " ties as quite eluded and defeated the main deſign of them." The ſame author obſerves, That " at the time of Chriſt's coming into the world, mankind in general " were in a ſtate of groſs ignorance and darkneſs with reſpect to the true knowledge " of God, and of themſelves, and of all thoſe moral relations and obligations we " ſtand in to the ſupreme Being, and to one another."——That " they were under " great uncertainties concerning a future ſtate, and the concern of divine Providence " in the government of the world"—That " our Saviour's doctrines on theſe heads, " though they be the true and genuine dictates of nature and reaſon, when he had " ſet them in a proper light, yet were ſuch as the people never would have known " without ſuch an inſtructor, and ſuch means and opportunities of knowledge." And that it doth not follow, that, " becauſe theſe are natural truths, and moral " obligations, therefore there could be no need of Revelation to diſcover them; as " the books of Euclid and Newton's Principia contain natural truths, and ſuch as " are neceſſarily founded in the reaſon of things, and yet none but a fool or a mad- " man would ſay, that he could have informed himſelf in theſe matters as well " without them." Dr. Morgan's Moral Philoſopher, vol. I. p. 143, 144, 145.

(*i*) A very learned writer, who will not allow that any ſingle perſon of the human race ever, in fact, arrived at the right knowledge of God, merely by the natural exerciſe of his own rational powers, without foreign inſtruction and aſſiſtance,

this cannot be judged of from any ſyſtems formed by perſons that live in ages and countries, which have enjoyed the light of Divine Revelation, and where its diſcoveries, doctrines, and laws have been received and entertained; ſince in this caſe it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that they have borrowed light from Revelation, though they are not willing to acknowledge it, or may not themſelves be ſenſible of it. And therefore ſyſtems drawn up by our modern admirers of Natural Religion in Chriſtian countries, cannot be brought in proof of the force of unaſſiſted Reaſon in matters of Religion. And the ſame may be ſaid of thoſe Pagan philoſophers who lived after Chriſtianity had made ſome progreſs in the world.

Nor can the ſufficiency of the light of Natural Reaſon, left merely to itſelf, without the aids of Revelation, be regularly argued from the ſyſtems of the ancient philoſophers, lawgivers, and moraliſts, who lived before the Chriſtian Revelation was publiſhed; except it can be ſhewn, that they themſelves derived the religious and moral principles which they taught, ſolely and

yet does not carry it ſo far as to affirm, that it is not poſſible for any man to do ſo. He obſerves, that "in examining how far mankind are able, of themſelves, to extend their knowledge of religious matters, we muſt all along mean the bulk of mankind, and only regard the common powers of human nature, as they may, poſſibly, be employed and exerted by the individuals of our ſpecies in the common circumſtances of human life: ſo that although one man, or ſome few men, in this or that age or place of the world, ſhould happen, by ſome lucky juncture, from one ſtep to another, to come at length to ſhew themſelves able to diſcover the Being and perfections of God, the immortality of the ſoul, and other articles of Natural Religion, yet this uncommon event can never be accounted a fair ſtandard, whereby to judge of the common powers and abilities of the bulk of mankind." Campbell's Neceſſity of Revelation, p. 64. He expreſſes himſelf to the ſame purpoſe, p. 66 and 72.

entirely

entirely from the reſearches and diſquiſitions of their own Reaſon, and diſclaimed their having had any aſſiſtance, with regard to thoſe truths and principles, from tradition or divine inſtruction. And it is no hard matter to ſhew by teſtimonies from the moſt celebrated ancients, that this was not the caſe, nor was it what they aſſumed to themſelves. It is a thing well known, that the moſt admired philoſophers of Greece did not pretend to ſet up merely on their own ſtock, but travelled into Egypt, and different parts of the Eaſt, to improve their knowledge by converſation with the ſages of thoſe countries; who themſelves profeſſed to have derived their knowledge, not merely from the diſquiſitions of their own Reaſon, but from a higher ſource, from very antient traditions, to which for the moſt part they aſſigned a divine original. And indeed, ſuppoſing an original Revelation to have been communicated to the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race, which (I ſhall ſhew) there is great reaſon to believe, the moſt conſiderable veſtiges of it were to be expected in the Eaſtern nations, which lay neareſt to the ſeat of the firſt men; and from which the reſt of the world had their knowledge of Religion and Letters. To this it may be added, that the moſt celebrated and ſagacious of the ancient philoſophers made pathetical complaints of human darkneſs and ignorance, and the great difficulties they met with in ſearching after truth. Many of them were ſenſible of the great need there was of a divine inſtruction and aſſiſtance, for enlightening and directing mankind in matters of Religion and their duty (*k*). So that no argument can be juſtly drawn from

(*k*) This is particularly ſhewn in Dr. Clarke's Diſcourſe of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 304, et ſeq. and in Dr. Ellis's "Knowledge of divine things from "Revelation, not from Nature or Reaſon."

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the wiſe men and philoſophers among the ancients, to ſhew that the knowledge of what is uſually called Natural Religion, in its juſt extent, is wholly and originally owing to the force of human Reaſon, excluſive of all Divine Revelation. And perhaps it would not be eaſy to mention any nations, among whom any true knowledge of Religion has been preſerved, concerning which we can be aſſured, that they never had any benefit from the light of Divine Revelation; and that the principles of religious truth and duty, which were to be found among them, were originally the mere product of natural Reaſon, without any higher aſſiſtance. Several things may be obſerved amongſt them, which ſeem to be the remains of an antient univerſal tradition, or primæval Religion, derived from the remoteſt antiquity, and which, probably, had their original ſource in Divine Revelation, though, in proceſs of time, it was greatly altered and corrupted. This is only mentioned here, but will be more fully conſidered in the Sequel of this Treatiſe.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Of REVEALED RELIGION.

BY Revealed Religion is commonly underſtood that knowledge of Religion, which was originally communicated from God to men in a way of extraordinary Revelation, for inſtructing them in important religious truth, and directing and engaging them to the practice of their duty. In a general ſenſe, all truth, and the manifeſtation of it, may be ſaid to come from God, even that which we diſcover in the ordinary uſe of thoſe rational faculties which he hath given us. But when we ſpeak of Revealed Religion, as diſtinguiſhed from that which is uſually called Natural, it is to be underſtood of that knowledge of Religion, which was originally communicated in an extraordinary and ſupernatural way. And ſuch a Revelation muſt either be by an immediate infallible inſpiration, or illumination of every particular perſon, for enlightening and directing him in the knowledge and practice of Religion; or by God's making an extraordinary diſcovery of himſelf, and of his will to ſome perſon or perſons, to be by them communicated to others in his name. In the former caſe it could not be properly called extraordinary Revelation: For if it were an univerſal infallible light, imparted to every ſingle perſon in every nation and every age, from the beginning of the world, it would be as common and familiar to every one as the common light of Reaſon, and by being univerſal

verſal would ceaſe to be extraordinary. That this is poſſible to the Divine Power, cannot be doubted; but it is evident in fact, that this is not the way which it hath pleaſed the Divine Wiſdom to take with mankind. For if every man were inſpired with the knowledge of Religion in a way of immediate infallible Revelation, it could not poſſibly have happened, that the moſt of mankind, in all ages, have been involved in darkneſs and error, and have fallen into a groſs ignorance of true Religion, and into the moſt abſurd ſuperſtitions and idolatries. If, therefore, there be ſuch a thing as Revealed Religion, if it hath pleaſed God to make diſcoveries of his will to mankind with regard to religious truth and duty, in a way of extraordinary Revelation, the moſt natural way, and that which is beſt accommodated to the preſent ſtate of mankind, ſeems to be this; that the Revelation ſhould be imparted to ſome perſon or perſons, to be by them communicated to others in his name (*l*); at the ſame time furniſhing them with ſufficient proofs and credentials, to ſhew that they were indeed ſent and inſpired by him; and that the doctrines and laws they publiſh to the world in his name, were really and originally communicated by Revelation from him. For in this method there is

(*l*) When we ſpeak of the Revelation's being communicated to others, beſides thoſe who originally and immediately received it from God, this is to be underſtood of the matter of that Revelation, or the doctrines and laws which are thus revealed. For though the inſpiration itſelf, conſidered as an act of God upon the mind, is a perſonal thing, and cannot be communicated by the perſon who receives it to others, yet the doctrines and laws he thus receives from God, may be by him communicated to others by word and writing, as readily as if he had received them in the ordinary and natural way. And they to whom they are thus communicated, are obliged to receive them as of divine authority, in proportion to the proofs and evidences which are given them, that the perſon that delivered them was indeed ſent of God, and received them by Revelation from him.

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ſufficient proof given to ſatisfy well diſpoſed minds, and proviſion is made for inſtructing men, if it be not their own faults, in the knowledge of Religion, and engaging them to the practice of the duties it requireth: and at the ſame time, there is room for the exerciſe of reaſon, for examination and enquiry into the nature of the evidence, and for the trial of men's ſincerity and diligence, of their impartial love of truth, and openneſs to receive it.

With regard to Revelation as now explained, ſeveral queſtions ariſe, which deſerve to be conſidered. The firſt relates to the poſſibility of it. The ſecond to the uſefulneſs and expediency, or even neceſſity of it in the preſent ſtate of mankind. The third relates to the proofs and evidences, whereby it may be ſhewn, that ſuch a Revelation hath been actually given.

That God can, if he thinks fit, make a Revelation of himſelf, and his will to men in an extraordinary way, different from the diſcoveries made by men themſelves in the mere natural and ordinary uſe of their own rational faculties and powers, appears to me to be ſo evident, that I do not ſee how any man that believes a God and a Providence, can reaſonably deny it. For if the power of God be Almighty, it muſt extend to whatſoever doth not imply a contradiction, which cannot be pretended in this caſe. We cannot diſtinctly explain the origin of our ideas, or the way in which they are excited or impreſſed on the human mind. But we know that theſe ways are very various. And can it be ſuppoſed, that the author of our beings hath it not in his power to communicate ideas to our minds, for inſtructing and informing us in what it nearly concerneth us to know? Our not

being able clearly to explain the manner in which this is done, is no juſt objection againſt it. For this we have the acknowledgment of a noble and ingenious writer, who is of a diſtinguiſhed rank among the oppoſers of Revelation. He obſerves, that "an "extraordinary action of God upon the human mind, which the "word Inſpiration is now uſed to denote, is not more uncon-"ceivable than the ordinary action of mind on body, or body on "mind." And that "it is impertinent to deny the exiſtence of "any phænomenon, merely becauſe we cannot account for it (*m*)."

And as it cannot reaſonably be denied, that God can, if he ſees fit, communicate his will to men in a way of extraordinary Revelation, ſo he can do it in ſuch a manner, as to give thoſe to whom this Revelation is originally and immediately made, a full and certain aſſurance of its being a true divine Revelation. This naturally follows upon the former. For to ſuppoſe that God can communicate his will in a way of extraordinary Revelation, and yet is not able to give a ſufficient aſſurance to the perſon or perſons to whom he thus reveals his will, that the Revelation comes from him, is evidently abſurd and contradictory. It is, in effect, to ſay, that he can reveal his will, but has no way of making men know that he does ſo: which is a moſt unreaſonable limitation of the divine power and wiſdom (*n*). He that pretends to pronounce that this is impoſſible, is bound to ſhew where the impoſſibility of it lies. If men, like ourſelves, can communicate their thoughts by ſpeech or language in ſuch a way as that we may

(*m*) Lord Bolingbroke's Works, vol. II. p. 468. Edit. 4to.

(*n*) See, concerning this, Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, vol. II. chap. i. p. 3, 4. 2d Edit.

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certainly know who it is that ſpeaks to us, it would be a ſtrange thing to affirm, that God, on ſuppoſition of his communicating his mind and will to any perſon or perſons in a way of extraordinary Revelation, has no way of cauſing them to know that it is he, and no other, that makes this diſcovery to them. The ingenious author of the Moral Philoſopher was ſenſible of this. He expreſsly grants, that "God may communicate and convey ſpiritual "and divine truth, either mediately or immediately as he thinks "fit, either by the ſuperior ſtrength and extent of men's own "natural faculties, or by any more immediate ſupernatural illu-"mination." And again, that "God may reveal or diſcover "truth to the mind in a way ſuperior to what is common and "natural." And he owns, that "immediate Inſpiration or Re-"velation from God may communicate a certainty to the man "thus immediately inſpired, equal to that which ariſeth from a "mathematical demonſtration (*o*)." Though he will not allow, that the knowledge of ſuch truth can go any farther upon divine authority, or as a matter of divine faith, than to the perſon or perſons thus inſpired, or to whom the Revelation is immediately made.

This leads me to another obſervation on this ſubject; and that is, that God can commiſſion thoſe to whom he has made an extraordinary Revelation of his will, to communicate to others what they have received from him, and can furniſh them with ſuch credentials of their divine miſſion, as are ſufficient to prove that he ſent them, and that the doctrines and laws they deliver in his

(*o*) Moral Philoſopher, vol. I. p. 82, 83, 84. and vol. II. p. 44, 45.

name, were indeed received from God. It muſt be acknowledged, that though the perſons to whom the original Revelation was made, were never ſo ſure that it is a true divine Revelation, and that they received it from God; their being certain of it is no aſſurance to others, except they be able to give ſome farther proofs and evidences, which may be ſufficient to ſhew the juſtneſs of their pretenſions. It is true, that if they appear from their whole conduct and character to be excellent perſons, of great piety, probity and ſimplicity, not actuated by worldly ambition, avarice, or ſenſuality, nor carried away by a diſorderly imagination and hot-brained enthuſiaſm, but of ſound and ſober minds: if the Revelation they profeſs to have received from God hath nothing in it contrary to the evident dictates of right reaſon, and is of an excellent tendency, manifeſtly directed to the glory of God, and to the good of mankind, and to promote the cauſe of truth, righteouſneſs, and virtue in the world: if the doctrines and laws they publiſh in the name of God be of ſuch a nature, and have ſuch a degree of wiſdom, goodneſs, and purity in them, as is vaſtly ſuperior to what could have been expected in an ordinary way from the perſons by whom they were publiſhed to the world; and therefore could not be reaſonably ſuppoſed to be the product of their own invention: and if there be nothing in the whole that gives a juſt ſuſpicion of artful impoſture, or a deſign to impoſe upon mankind; but much to the contrary: Theſe muſt be owned to be ſtrong preſumptive arguments in their favour. But ſtill it may be reaſonably expected, that if God commiſſions perſons to deliver doctrines and laws to the world in his name, he will furniſh them with poſitive proofs and evidences ſufficient to convince

convince reaſonable and well-diſpoſed minds that he ſent them. That it is poſſible for God to give ſuch proofs and evidences, cannot, without great abſurdity, be denied. The omnipotent author of nature, and Lord of the univerſe can undoubtedly, if he thinks fit, enable ſuch perſons to perform the moſt wonderful works in his name as a proof that he ſent them; works of ſuch a nature, and ſo circumſtanced, as manifeſtly to tranſcend all human power, and bear the evident marks of a divine interpoſition (*p*). He can alſo endue them with ſupernatural gifts, and enable them to give expreſs predictions of future contingent events which no human ſagacity could foreſee; and which yet ſhall be accompliſhed in the proper ſeaſon. That God can, in his inexhauſtible power and wiſdom, by theſe and other methods, ſignify to the world that he ſent them, and give a divine atteſtation to the doctrines and laws delivered by them in his name, no man that has juſt notions of the Deity, can conſiſtently deny. A writer, who has diſtinguiſhed himſelf in oppoſition to Revelation, has thought fit to own, that "when men are ſunk into groſs ig-

(*p*) Some of the moſt noted oppoſers of Revelation have made conceſſions which tend to ſhew, that miracles, ſuppoſing them to have been really performed, may be of ſuch a nature, as to yield a ſufficient proof of the divine miſſion of the perſons by whom, and of the divine authority of doctrines and laws in atteſtation of which they are wrought. Mr. Collins acknowledges, that "miracles, when done in proof "of doctrines and precepts, that are conſiſtent with reaſon, and for the honour of "God, and the good of mankind, ought to determine men to believe and receive "them." Scheme of literal Prophecy conſidered, p. 321, 322. Mr. Woolſton ſays, "I believe it will be granted on all hands, that the reſtoring a perſon indiſ-"putably dead to life is a ſtupendous miracle, and that two or three ſuch miracles "well atteſted and credibly reported, are enough to conciliate the belief, that the "author of them was a divine agent, and inveſted with the power of God." See his 5th Diſcourſe on miracles, p. 3. And Spinoſa is ſaid to have declared, that if he could believe that the reſurrection of Lazarus was really wrought as it is related, he would give up his ſyſtem.

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" norance and error, and are greatly vitiated in their affections " and paſſions, then God may (for any reaſon, ſays he, that I " can ſee to the contrary) kindly interpoſe by a ſpecial application " of his power and providence, and reveal to men ſuch uſeful " truths as otherwiſe they might be ignorant of, or might not " attend to; and alſo lay before them ſuch rules of life as they " ought to walk by, and likewiſe preſs their obedience with pro- " per motives, and thereby lead them to repentance and refor- " mation." This ſeems to be a fair conceſſion; but he endeavours, as far as in him lies, to render it ineffectual by adding, " But then that it is ſo, and when it is ſo, will, in the nature of " the thing, be a matter of doubt and diſputation (*q*)." And elſewhere he confidently affirms, that " in what way ſoever God " communicateth knowledge to men, it muſt always be a matter " of uncertainty whether the Revelation be divine or not: and " that we have no rule to judge, or from which we can with cer- " tainty diſtinguiſh divine Revelation from deluſion (*r*). The plain meaning of which is this, that if we ſhould ſuppoſe, which is the caſe this author himſelf puts, both that men ſtand in need of an extraordinary Revelation from God, and that God ſees fit to interpoſe, by a ſpecial application of his power and providence, to grant ſuch a Revelation, yet he has it not in his power to effect this kind deſign, or to make it known to the world that he really gives ſuch a Revelation, though his goodneſs ſhould incline him to do ſo, and the circumſtances of mankind ſhould require

(*q*) Chubb's Poſthumous Works, vol. I. p. 292, 293.

(*r*) Ibid. vol. II. p. 5.

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it. This ſeems to me to be, in effect, an entering a Proteſt againſt the Almighty, and a declaring beforehand, that let him do what he can to aſſure us of his having given ſuch a Revelation of his will, we are reſolved not to believe it.

Another thing which ought to be obſerved upon this ſubject is, that not only they who live in the age when the Revelation was firſt publiſhed to the world, may have ſuch proofs of it as may be ſufficient to convince them of its divine authority and original, but that it may be tranſmitted with ſuch evidence to thoſe that live in ſucceeding ages, as may lay them under an obligation to receive and ſubmit to it as a Revelation from God. Suppoſing doctrines and laws to have been originally communicated in a way of extraordinary Revelation, all that would be neceſſary to render that Revelation uſeful to diſtant ages and nations, would be that the doctrines and laws, which are the ſubject matter of this Revelation, together with an authentick account of the proofs and evidences by which the divine original and authority of that Revelation was atteſted and confirmed, ſhould be faithfully tranſmitted to ſucceeding generations. In this caſe, thoſe to whom it is thus tranſmitted enjoy the benefit of that Revelation, and may be ſaid to have the light of it, as really, tho' not ſo immediately, communicated to them, as if they had lived in the age when it was firſt given. It muſt be acknowledged, that oral Tradition is not a very ſure conveyance. But it is manifeſt, that writings may be tranſmitted with ſuch a degree of evidence, as to leave no room for reaſonable doubt. This is the

moſt ſimple and natural way of propagating the knowledge of Revelation to ſucceeding ages. If, therefore, that Revelation had any original authority, then, on ſuppoſition that thoſe of ſucceeding generations have ſufficient evidence to aſſure them of its having been ſafely tranſmitted, it is really of as divine authority to them, as it was to thoſe to whom it was firſt publiſhed, and they are obliged to receive and ſubmit to it as ſuch: ſince, on this ſuppoſition, they have thoſe very doctrines and laws in their hands, which were originally communicated by Divine Revelation, and have alſo a ſufficient aſſurance of the truth of thoſe extraordinary facts and evidences, by which it was originally atteſted and confirmed. No man is able to ſhew, that there is any thing abſurd in this ſuppoſition. And it may be, and has often been, clearly proved, that what is here ſuppoſed as poſſible, is actually fact, with regard to the Revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures: and that we have greater evidence of the ſafe tranſmiſſion of thoſe ſacred writings, without any general and material corruption and alteration, than we have concerning other books, the genuineneſs of which is univerſally acknowledged.

I know of nothing which can be objected againſt this, but the uncertainty of moral evidence, and the fallibility of hiſtorical human teſtimony. It is eaſy to declaim plauſibly on this ſubject; but allowing all that can be reaſonably alleged to ſhew that it is often fallacious, and not to be depended upon, it cannot be denied that this kind of evidence may be, and frequently is, ſo circumſtanced, that the man would ſcarce be thought in his ſenſes that ſhould ſeriouſly deny or doubt of it. It is by moral evidence,

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and the teſtimony of fallible men, capable of deceiving and being deceived, that a man who has never been at Paris or Rome knows that there are ſuch cities, and yet he can no more reaſonably doubt of it than if he had ſeen them with his own eyes. It is by moral evidence that we have all our laws and records, and the aſſurance of any paſt facts. And yet is there any man of ſenſe, that does not as certainly believe many facts which were done in former ages, as he believes any event that has happened of late years, and within his own memory? It is manifeſt that the author of our beings, and the wiſe governor of the world, deſigned that a great part of our knowledge ſhould come in this way, and that we ſhould be governed and determined by this kind of evidence and teſtimony in many caſes of great importance. The neceſſity we are under of doing this ariſeth from the very frame of our nature, and the conſtitution of things, and from the circumſtances in which we are placed in the world, and conſequently from the will and appointment of God himſelf. Why then ſhould it be thought abſurd to ſuppoſe, that he ſhould ſo order it that our knowledge of ſome important matters relating to Religion, ſhould alſo come in this way of conveyance? If God has been pleaſed, in a former age, to make a Revelation of his will to mankind, deſigned for the uſe not only of that but of ſucceeding ages; and if this Revelation, with its doctrines and laws, be tranſmitted to us in that way of conveyance, which we ourſelves ſhould count unqueſtionable in other caſes, and with as much evidence as we could reaſonably expect, ſuppoſing a Revelation to have been really given in paſt ages; and if we have as much aſſurance of the extraordinary facts whereby it was originally at-

teſted, as we could fairly expect concerning any paſt facts, ſuppoſing thoſe facts to have been really done; God may juſtly require us to receive and ſubmit to that Revelation. And he that receives it upon that evidence acts a wiſe and good part, becoming a reaſonable Being and Moral Agent. To demand that God ſhould continually ſend new Revelations to aſſure us of his having formerly given us a well-atteſted Revelation, and ſhould cauſe the ſame facts to be done over again for our conviction, would be the moſt unreaſonable thing in the world. At that rate thoſe extraordinary facts muſt be repeated in every age, in every nation, and for the ſatisfaction of every ſingle perſon; for one hath as much right to demand it as another; and by being thus common, they would ceaſe to be extraordinary: and this very thing would hinder the effect. Miracles are not to be multiplied without neceſſity. Nor can it be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that God will interpoſe in an extraordinary way to aſſure us of paſt facts, when the ordinary is ſufficient, and when they come to us with as great evidence as the nature of the thing will admit of, and which we ourſelves ſhould count ſufficient in any other caſe.

What has been offered may be of uſe to remove ſome prejudices againſt Revelation in general, and to ſhew that there is no abſurdity in ſuppoſing that there may be ſuch a thing as Revealed Religion.

But although it cannot reaſonably be denied, that God can, if he pleaſes, make an extraordinary Revelation of his will, accompanied with ſufficient evidence to convince thoſe to whom it is made known of its divine authority, yet it cannot be ſuppoſed that

that he would do this if it were of no real uſe or advantage to mankind. For it is not reaſonable to believe, that an infinitely wiſe God would take ſuch an extraordinary method, if there were no neceſſity for it, and if it would anſwer no valuable end at all.

The next thing, therefore, to be conſidered, after having ſhewn that an extraordinary Revelation from God is poſſible, is the great uſefulneſs and advantage of Divine Revelation, and the need there is of it in the preſent ſtate of mankind, for ſupporting and promoting the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world. And there are ſeveral conſiderations from which it may be juſtly concluded, that a well atteſted Revelation from God would be of great advantage, and a ſignal inſtance of the divine grace and goodneſs towards us.

It may be of great uſe even with regard to thoſe truths and principles which lie at the foundation of all Religion; ſuch as the truths relating to the excellent and unparalleled nature, the perfections and attributes of the one ſupreme God. The generality of mankind ſeem not to be well qualified to purſue theſe truths, and deduce them from clear and certain principles, in an orderly chain of argumentation. They are ſo taken up with their worldly concernments, and carried off by a variety of pleaſures and cares, ſo intangled in ſenſible and material objects, that if left merely to themſelves, there is little likelihood of their forming right ideas of things ſpiritual and inviſible. It is generally by education and inſtruction that theſe principles firſt enter into their minds, and

where they have not been taught or inſtructed, they know little or nothing about them. And even as to perſons of philoſophical minds, who apply themſelves to abſtract enquiries, and profeſſedly ſearch into the nature of things, how apt they are, when truſting merely to the powers of their own reaſon, to form wrong notions of the Deity, and how ſtrangely bewildered in their enquiries on this ſubject, the following book will afford many melancholy proofs. A noble author, who is an avowed patron of Natural Religion as oppoſed to Revelation, tells us, that "Theiſts will "concur in aſcribing all poſſible perfections to the Supreme Be-"ing:" But then he adds, that "they will always differ when "they deſcend into any detail, and pretend to be particular about "them; as they have always differed in their notions of thoſe "perfections (*s*)." I think, therefore, it cannot reaſonably be denied, that a true Divine Revelation might be of great uſe for giving men a more clear and certain knowledge of that moſt adorable Being, and his glorious attributes, than they would otherwiſe have attained to, and for preventing or rectifying thoſe errors they might be apt to fall into, in matters of ſuch importance, and which are ſo far above our reach. For who ſo fit to declare his own nature and perfections, as far as it is proper and needful for us to know them, as God himſelf? And it is what one would think every real and well-diſpoſed Theiſt ſhould earneſtly wiſh for, that God would be graciouſly pleaſed to make ſuch a clear and expreſs Revelation of himſelf and his perfections, as might direct men in forming juſt and worthy notions of the Divinity,

(*s*) Bolingbroke's Works, vol. V. p. 255. 4to.

eſpecially

eſpecially of what it moſt nearly concerneth us to know, his moral attributes.

Another matter of great importance, in which a Divine Revelation might be of eminent uſe, relateth to the Providence of God. If left merely to our own reaſonings and conjectures, many doubts might ariſe in our minds, whether that infinitely glorious Majeſty, who is exalted above our higheſt conceptions, would concern himſelf about ſuch inconſiderable beings as we are, or any of the things relating to us. And as there are many who are uneaſy at the thoughts of God's exerciſing a continual inſpection over our actions, this would naturally byaſs them to lay hold on any pretence for rejecting it. But if God ſhould condeſcend, by an expreſs Revelation confirmed by ſufficient evidence, to aſſure us of his concern for the individuals of the human race; that he takes cognizance of their actions, and orders the events relating to them; this would be the moſt effectual way to diſpel their doubts, to ſtrike bad men with a wholeſome fear, and to inſpire the good and virtuous with a chearful hope, an entire reſignation, and a ſteady affiance.

That ſome kind of religious worſhip and homage ought to be rendered to God by his reaſonable creatures, ſeems to be a dictate of reaſon and nature. But what kind of worſhip will be moſt acceptable to the Supreme Being, and what Rites are moſt proper to be made uſe of in his ſervice, unaſſiſted Reaſon cannot pretend poſitively and with certainty to determine. Even with reſpect to the offering up prayers to God for the things we ſtand in need of, which is that part of religious worſhip in which mankind ſeem to have

have been moſt generally agreed (*t*), how far this might be proper, or conſiſtent with the veneration we owe to his ſovereign greatneſs and majeſty, might be matter of doubt and ſcruple, without ſome ſignification of his will concerning it. And accordingly ſome perſons who have made great pretenſions to wiſdom, and a regard to the law of nature, have endeavoured to ſet aſide this part of our duty. But if God ſhould, by an expreſs Revelation, appoint the rites of his own worſhip, and ſhew men what kind of ſervice he doth require, and will accept; if he ſhould not only allow, but command them to offer up their prayers and ſupplications to him, and give them directions for the right performance of this duty, encouraging them to it by the moſt gracious promiſes; this would certainly, to all who believe and receive ſuch a Revelation, be a great ſatisfaction and advantage.

The doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State of Retributions, is of mighty importance to mankind; and the natural and moral arguments to prove it are of no ſmall weight: but yet there are ſeveral things to be oppoſed to them, which weaken the evidence, and may miniſter ground of ſuſpicion and doubt, if conſidered merely on the foot of natural reaſon. And accordingly ſome of the moſt eminent antient philoſophers either denied it, or expreſſed themſelves doubtfully and waveringly concerning it. And tho' the general principle, that God will, at one time or other, either here or hereafter, reward good men, and

(*t*) This ſeems to have been part of the primitive religion derived from the firſt parents of the human race, and which was originally owing to Divine Revelation.

puniſh

puniſh the wicked, is very agreeable to right reaſon; yet with regard to ſeveral particulars comprehended under this general principle, and upon which the right uſe and application of it in a great meaſure depends, the unaſſiſted light of Reaſon can give us little information. But if God himſelf ſhould, by a well-atteſted Revelation, aſſure us, that death ſhall not put an utter end to our being; that this preſent life is only the firſt ſtage of our exiſtence; that we ſhall be raiſed again from the dead, and that God will call all men to an account, and reward or puniſh them in a future ſtate according to their behaviour in this; and ſhould alſo ſignify to us the nature of thoſe rewards and puniſhments, and the qualifications of the perſons on whom they ſhall be conferred or inflicted; this muſt needs be of high advantage, and tend to give us ſatisfaction in a point of conſiderable importance, for encouraging men to the practice of virtue, and deterring them from vice and wickedneſs.

The light of Nature and Reaſon may give us ſome general ground of hope, that God will ſhew mercy to ſinners upon their repentance and amendment: but how far this mercy ſhall extend; whether he will pardon all manner of ſins, even thoſe of the moſt heinous kind, frequently repeated and long perſiſted in, barely upon repentance and amendment; and whether his pardon in that caſe will be only a mitigation or remiſſion of the threatened penalty, without a full reſtitution to grace and favour; and how far he will reward an obedience attended with failures and defects; theſe things might create anxious doubts and perplexities to ſerious and thoughtful minds. Eſpecially when it is

farther conſidered, that reaſon leadeth us to regard God as juſt as well as merciful, a wiſe and righteous governor, who will therefore exerciſe his pardoning mercy in ſuch a way as ſeemeth moſt fit to his rectoral wiſdom, and will beſt anſwer the ends of moral government. And of this ſuch ſhort-ſighted creatures as we are cannot pretend to be competent judges. It muſt, therefore, be a mighty advantage, to be aſſured, by expreſs Revelation from God, what the terms are upon which he will receive his guilty offending creatures to his grace and favour; that he will grant them a full pardon of all their iniquities, though they may have been very great and heinous, upon their true repentance and reformation; that he will not only deliver them from the penalties they had incurred by their ſins, but will confer upon them the moſt glorious privileges and benefits; and that he will reward their dutiful and ſincere obedience, though imperfect and falling ſhort of what the law in ſtrictneſs requires, with eternal life and happineſs. This muſt be an unſpeakable ſatisfaction to creatures conſcious to themſelves of many failures and defects. And it muſt alſo give them great comfort and encouragement to be aſſured, by expreſs promiſes from God, that if they uſe their own earneſt endeavours in the performance of their duty, he will grant them the gracious aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit, when from a ſenſe of their own weakneſs they humbly apply to him for them. To have theſe things aſcertained to us by a divine authority and teſtimony, muſt needs have a great tendency to fill the hearts of good men with a pious confidence and joy, and to animate them to a perſevering diligence and conſtancy in well doing, amidſt the many difficulties and temptations to which they are expoſed in this preſent ſtate.

With

With reſpect to Moral Obligations, as comprehending the duties we owe to God, our neighbours, and ourſelves, whatever certainty we might have of the grounds of thoſe obligations in general, yet we might be greatly at a loſs, if left merely to our unaſſiſted reaſon, as to the particular laws and duties comprehended under thoſe general rules. There may be duties which ſeem to be agreeable to reaſon, and yet cannot be clearly proved by arguments from the nature of the thing, to be neceſſarily obligatory. There may be ſuch objections brought againſt them, and with ſome appearance of reaſon, as may very much weaken the force and influence of them; eſpecially if, as is often the caſe, a ſtrong appetite or apparent worldly intereſt, happens to be on the other ſide. But a Divine Revelation, determining our duty in thoſe inſtances, would ſoon decide the point, and give thoſe laws and duties a weight and force which would over-rule the contrary pretences. And I may appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind, whether a clear and poſitive Revelation from God, declaring what it is that he requireth of us with reſpect to the particulars of our duty, would not be a vaſt advantage: and whether in that caſe men would not come far more eaſily and certainly to the knowledge of their duty, than if they were left to collect it, every man for himſelf, from the reaſons and fitneſſes of things; or from what he might take to be the dictates of his own nature, and conducive to his own happineſs; as to which, through the prevalence of appetites and paſſions, men are very apt to paſs wrong judgments; or from the reaſonings of Philoſophers and Moraliſts, who are far from agreeing in their ſentiments; or, if they did, are not to be abſolutely depended upon, and have no

authority to make their ſentiments paſs for laws obligatory upon mankind.

The laſt thing I ſhall here obſerve, with regard to the uſefulneſs or neceſſity of Divine Revelation is, that there may be ſeveral things, which it may be of great advantage to us to know, which yet are of ſuch a nature, that we could not pretend at all to diſcover them merely by the force of our own reaſon; as being things that do not lie within our reach, or which depend upon the free counſels of God. It is evident that in ſuch caſes a Divine Revelation is the only means of diſcovery: and our certainty riſes in proportion to the proofs and evidences we have that it is a Divine Teſtimony.

Theſe ſeveral conſiderations are ſufficient to ſhew, that a true Divine Revelation, ſuppoſing God to give it to the world, would be of great advantage: and that there is great need of it in the preſent ſtate of mankind. And where ſuch a Revelation is given, and there is ſufficient proof of its Divine Authority, it ought to be received with the profoundeſt ſubmiſſion and veneration, and with the higheſt thankfulneſs. But we are to take this along with us, that Divine Revelation is not deſigned to ſuperſede the uſe of our own reaſon, or to render the exerciſe of it needleſs, but to guide, improve, and perfect it.

Revelation is far from diſcarding or weakening any argument, that can be juſtly brought from reaſon, in proof of any truths relating to Religion or Morality; but adds to them the atteſtation of a divine

a divine authority or teſtimony, which muſt needs be of great weight. This both gives a farther degree of certainty with regard to thoſe things which are in ſome degree diſcoverable by the light of reaſon, and furniſheth a ſufficient ground of aſſent, with reſpect to thoſe things which bare unaſſiſted reaſon, if left to itſelf, could not have diſcovered, and which yet it may be of uſe to us to know.

By the common conſent of mankind, a competent authority is, in many caſes, a good and proper medium to aſſure us of the truth of things. And to believe upon the credit of ſuch an authority and teſtimony is ſo far from being a renouncing our reaſon, as ſome have pretended, that on the contrary it is what reaſon and good ſenſe require, and to refuſe it would be to act an abſurd and unreaſonable part (*v*). And particularly ſuppoſing an extraordinary Revelation from God, and that of this we are convinced by ſufficient proof, it is very reaſonable to receive what is there revealed upon the authority of the Revealer. And indeed it would be a contradiction to believe it to be a Revelation from God, and yet refuſe our aſſent to it: Since it is a moſt evident principle, that as God is incapable of deceiving or being deceived, whatſoever he hath revealed muſt be true.

That God hath made a Revelation of his will to men, hath been the general ſenſe of mankind in all ages and nations. This might have been originally owing to a Tradition of ſome extra-

(*v*) See, concerning this, Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, vol. II. chap. i. p. 17. et ſeq. edit. 2d.

ordinary Revelation or Revelations really communicated in the earlieſt times, to the firſt anceſtors of the human race; from whom it was tranſmitted to their deſcendants, though, in proceſs of time, in a great meaſure corrupted and loſt. Or at leaſt it ſhews, that men have generally thought that a Revelation from God to men was both poſſible and probable; and that this was agreeable to the ideas they had formed of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, and of his concern for mankind. It alſo ſhews, that they were ſenſible of the need they ſtood in of ſuch extraordinary diſcoveries from God, to inſtruct and direct them in the knowledge of his will and their duty. It muſt be owned, indeed, that this notion of an intercourſe between God and men in a way of extraordinary Revelation has given occaſion to impoſtures and deluſions: that it has induced men of warm imaginations to take their own reveries, the workings of their diſtempered brain and fancies, for Divine Inſpirations; and that artful impoſtors have taken advantage from it to put their own inventions upon the people for divine diſcoveries and injunctions; in order to anſwer the ends of their ambition and avarice, and to erect a tyranny over the minds and conſciences of men. This has opened a large field for declamation. But it affords no reaſonable preſumption, that there never was a true Revelation given from God to men. All that can be fairly concluded from it is, that the beſt and moſt excellent things may be perverted and abuſed by the folly and wickedneſs of men. The ſame way of arguing has been employed by Atheiſts, to ſhew that mankind had better be without any Religion at all; and that there is no way of preventing or curing the miſchiefs of ſuperſtition, but by denying a God and a Providence.

Providence. And it might as plauſibly be pretended, that all kinds of civil government and polity ought to be rejected, and that it would be better for mankind, that there were no civil government at all. And yet I believe every conſiderate and impartial perſon will be of opinion, that all the miſchiefs which have ever ariſen from the abuſe of Religion and civil government, fall vaſtly ſhort of the evils of atheiſm and univerſal anarchy; which would bring along with it a diſſolution of all order, and of the ſtrongeſt bands of ſociety; and would produce ſuch a ſcene of confuſion and licentiouſneſs, that a wiſe and good man would be apt to prefer non-exiſtence before it (*u*).

(*u*) Cotta in Cicero has, in like manner, with great eloquence, diſplayed the miſchiefs of Reaſon, and has endeavoured to ſhew, that it would be better for mankind to be without it; and that if the Gods had intended to do them harm, they could not have given them a worſe thing. De Nat. Deor. l. 3. cap. xxvi. et ſeq. et cap. xxxii. The ſum of what he there offers to ſhew that Reaſon is not the gift of God, is becauſe of the abuſe that has been made of it. And whereas it might be ſaid, that there are ſome who make a good uſe of their Reaſon, he anſwers that theſe are very few; and it cannot be ſuppoſed that God would only conſult the welfare, or provide for the benefit of a few. If he did it for any, he would do it for all. "Si mens voluntaſque divina idcirco conſuluit hominibus, "quod iis eſt largita rationem, iis ſolis conſuluit, quos bona ratione donavit: quos "videmus, ſi modo ulli ſint, eſſe perpaucos. Non placet autem paucis a Diis im-"mortalibus eſſe conſultum: Sequitur ergò ut nemini conſultum ſit." ibid. cap. xxvii. p. 319. It is after the ſame manner that ſome have argued, that if the benefit of Divine Revelation were given to any, it muſt be given equally to all; and ſince it is manifeſt it is not given to all, this ſhews it is not given to any. This certainly would be thought a very abſurd way of talking in any other caſe. It by no means follows, that becauſe ſome perſons or nations ſeem to be advantageouſly diſtinguiſhed above others by having better means of religious or moral improvement, therefore they are to deny or ſlight their own advantages, and not acknowledge them as the gifts and bleſſings of Divine Providence, nor be thankful to God for them.

Beſides,

Beſides, it muſt be conſidered, that theſe gentlemen who make this objection againſt the uſefulneſs of Divine Revelation, do not believe that there ever was a real Divine Revelation given to mankind. They cannot, therefore, juſtly argue from the miſchiefs which they mention, and take ſo much pains to exaggerate, that a real and well-atteſted Revelation would be of no uſe or benefit to the world! Since, upon their ſuppoſition, the miſchief was only owing to falſly pretended ones. And I cannot well ſee what method theſe gentlemen could take to prevent it. If they themſelves ſhould ſet up for inſtructors of the people, what ſecurity could we have that in that caſe they would not come in time to act the Prieſts, and take advantage to impoſe upon the ignorance and credulity of mankind for anſwering their own political and intereſted views? Much of that falſe Religion that is in the world, has been owing to men, who, in reality, had no Religion at all. And it may juſtly be affirmed, that a real Divine Revelation, publiſhed for the uſe of mankind, and confirmed by ſufficient evidence, would, if duly attended to, be the beſt and moſt effectual preſervative againſt the abuſes and miſchiefs ariſing from falſly pretended ones. This would be the moſt likely means to furniſh the people with juſt notions of Religion, and to reſcue them from that ignorance which expoſes them to impoſture and deluſion, and tends to render them a prey to artful and deſigning men. And it is certain in fact, that in thoſe parts of the world, where the Chriſtian Revelation, as contained in the Holy Scriptures, is moſt generally received and ſpread among the people, the great principles of what is uſually called Natural Religion are moſt generally believed and beſt underſtood: and at the ſame time,

the people, by being acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, are the leaſt liable to be impoſed upon by ſuperſtition and prieſtcraft (*x*). It is a thing not to be conteſted, that what abuſes have been or are found among profeſſed Chriſtians have not been owing to their adherence to that Revelation, but to their deviations from it. And the beſt and moſt effectual remedy againſt thoſe abuſes and corruptions, would be to keep cloſe to the original rule of Faith and Practice laid down in thoſe ſacred writings.

The conſiderations which have been offered are ſufficient to ſhew the poſſibility of an extraordinary Revelation from God to men; and alſo that ſuch a Revelation would be of great uſe, and is very needful in the preſent ſtate of mankind, for leading them to the knowledge and practice of Religion. And whoſoever duly conſiders this, will be apt to conclude, from the goodneſs of God and the neceſſities of mankind, that God hath not left men at all times deſtitute of ſuch a valuable help for maintaining true Religion in the world, and engaging them to the practice of piety and virtue. And accordingly it pleaſed God in his great goodneſs to communicate the knowledge of Religion in its main fundamental principles to the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race, to be by them tranſmitted to their poſterity. This primitive Religion became greatly corrupted in the ſucceeding ages, eſpecially in what related to the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God: and the nations were generally fallen into the moſt groſs idolatry and polytheiſm. God might juſtly have left mankind without any farther extraordinary diſcoveries of his will; but he ſaw fit, in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, to grant

(*x*) This is what I have endeavoured particularly to ſhew: Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, vol. I. chap. ix.

a new

a new Revelation, which was particularly deſigned to eſtabliſh, by the moſt amazing exertions and diſplays of his divine power and majeſty, the ſovereign glory and dominion of the only true ſupreme God, in oppoſition to all idol deities: as alſo to give a ſyſtem of written laws, enforced by his divine authority, containing the chief duties of morality in plain and expreſs precepts: and likewiſe to keep up the faith and hope of that great Saviour of mankind, who had been promiſed from the beginning, and to prepare the way for his coming by a ſeries of illuſtrious prophecies. This Revelation, though immediately given to a particular people, was intended to be of uſe to other nations, and really was ſo in ſeveral reſpects, for preſerving ſome knowledge of true Religion in the world, when it ſeemed to be in a great meaſure defaced and loſt. This was ſucceeded, at the diſtance of ſeveral ages, by the moſt compleat and perfect diſpenſation of Religion that ever the world ſaw, and which was brought by that glorious and divine Perſon, whoſe coming had been ſo long promiſed and foretold, and who actually accompliſhed all the great things which had been ſpoken of him by the ancient prophets. By means of this Revelation, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God came to be reſtored among the nations, which had been ſunk in idolatry and polytheiſm for many ages: The beſt and nobleſt ideas are there given of God, and of the ſpiritual worſhip to be rendered to him: Precepts of the pureſt morality are publiſhed to mankind, ſetting the whole of our duty before us in its juſt extent: The moſt wonderful diſplays are made of the exceeding riches of the divine grace and mercy towards periſhing ſinners of the human race, and the gracious terms and

glorious

glorious promiſes of the new covenant are placed in the cleareſt light. The moſt expreſs aſſurances are given us of a future ſtate of retributions, ſome imperfect notions of which had long continued among the nations, but at length, through the corruption of mankind, and the falſe ſubtleties of men pretending to wiſdom and philoſophy, had been almoſt entirely defaced. The future puniſhments of the obſtinately wicked and impenitent are ſtrongly aſſerted, and the fulleſt diſcoveries made of a bleſſed reſurrection, and of eternal life and felicity for good men, as the reward of their ſincere though imperfect obedience.

Theſe ſeveral diſpenſations yield mutual light and ſupport to one another. The ſame ſcheme of Religion for ſubſtance is carried through them all, but is eſpecially compleated in the laſt. This which comes neareſt to our own times, and was accompanied with a fulneſs of evidence proportioned to its vaſt importance, gives an illuſtrious atteſtation to the preceding diſpenſations. And as each of them have diſtinct evidences of their own, ſo there is a conjunct evidence ariſing from the harmony of them when compared together, which exhibiteth a pleaſing view of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs towards mankind.

It is not my deſign at preſent to enter upon a particular conſideration of the proofs that are brought for the divine authority of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelation; both of which refer to and confirm the original Revelation made to mankind from the beginning. This has been done by many learned pens with great ſtrength of reaſon and argument; and I have, on ſome former

occaſions, contributed my endeavours this way (*y*). Little has been oppoſed to the arguments which have been offered on this ſubject, but ſuſpicions and preſumptions, and often groſs miſrepreſentations and rude ridicule; or ſuch particular difficulties and objections as do not affect the main of the evidence. Nor have I met with any thing that could deſerve the name of a fair and direct attempt, to invalidate the evidence of the extraordinary and important facts, by which the divine original and authority of thoſe Revelations is atteſted and eſtabliſhed. The principal thing on which the adverſaries of Religion ſeem to rely is the ſuppoſed ſufficiency of human reaſon, when left merely to its own unaſſiſted force and ſtrength for all the purpoſes of Religion; from whence it is inferred, that an extraordinary Revelation is entirely needleſs and uſeleſs. But how little foundation there is for this pretence, I propoſe to ſhew from undeniable fact and experience, in the enſuing treatiſe.

(*y*) See the Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, vol. II. eſpecially the ſix firſt chapters. See alſo the Divine Authority of the Old and New Teſtament aſſerted, vol. I. The ſame ſubject is alſo treated in ſeveral parts of the View of the Deiſtical Writers. And an abſtract of the whole may be ſeen in the Summary of the Evidences for Chriſtianity at the latter end of that work.

THE

THE

ADVANTAGE AND NECESSITY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION,

SHEWN FROM THE

State of Religion in the Heathen World.

PART I.

Relating to the Knowledge and Worſhip of the one true God.

CHAP. I.

Man, in his original conſtitution and the deſign of his Creator, a religious creature. Not left at his firſt formation to work out a ſcheme of Religion for himſelf. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, and confirmed by the moſt antient accounts, that the knowledge of Religion was communicated to the firſt Parents of the human race by a Revelation from God: and from them derived to their de-

ſcendants. God made farther diſcoveries of his will to Noah the ſecond Father of mankind. Tradition the chief way of conveying the knowledge of Religion in thoſe early ages.

THAT man is a religious creature, *i. e.* capable of Religion, and deſigned for it, is apparent to any one who makes due reflections upon the frame of the human nature (z). By Religion I underſtand the duty which reaſonable creatures owe to God their Creator and Benefactor, their ſovereign Lord and chiefeſt Good. It is manifeſt, from obſervation and experience, that men have faculties capable of contemplating the great Author of their Beings, and Lord of the univerſe, of adoring his perfections, and of acting from a regard to his authority, and in obedience to his laws. The inferior animals ſeem to be well fitted for the various functions and enjoyments of the ſenſitive life: but there is nothing in them, from which we can conclude that they are capable of forming any notions of God, or of the obligations of Religion. If there have been people among whom ſcarce any traces of Religion can be found, yet ſtill they have faculties, which, if duly improved, render them capable of being inſtructed in it. But who will undertake to inſtruct the brutes in the knowledge of God, and in the principles and precepts of Religion and Morality?

(z) When we ſay man is a religious creature, we do not mean that every man is born with an actual knowledge of Religion and its main principles, which is contrary to evident fact and experience: but with faculties capable of attaining to it by reflection and proper inſtruction.

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This ſeems then to be one remarkable proof of the ſuperior excellency of man above the other creatures in this lower world. From whence it follows, that he is deſigned proportionably for a more excellent end, and for a higher happineſs. Since it is evident in fact, that man is capable of riſing in his thoughts, when duly inſtructed, above the ſenſible objects which are before his eyes, to the inviſible author of nature, the ſupreme and abſolutely perfect Being, and of contemplating, loving, adoring, obeying him; it may be juſtly concluded, that this was the prinpal end for which he was deſigned, as being the worthieſt employment of his nobleſt powers. And to ſuppoſe this to be a principal end of his Being, and what he was originally made and deſigned for, and yet that he is under no obligation to anſwer that end, is too abſurd and inconſiſtent to be admitted. Man indeed hath a fleſhly part and animal powers in common with the inferior creatures, by which he is fitted for reliſhing and enjoying ſenſible good, but as he hath alſo a mind within him, which is undoubtedly the nobleſt part of his conſtitution, his principal end and higheſt happineſs muſt be judged of from the higheſt and moſt excellent part of his nature: and in which his proper diſtinction and pre-eminence above the inferior animals doth principally conſiſt.

Theſe ſeveral obſervations lead us to conſider man as deſigned and formed for Religion. If there be a relation between God and man, diſtinct from the relation men bear to one another: (and this is as certain as it is that God exiſteth, and that Man is a dependent creature, and the ſubject of the divine government) then

then there muſt be duties ariſing from the relation men bear to God, diſtinct from the duties they owe to their fellow-creatures. And if it is the will of God that they ſhould act correſpondently to the relations they bear to one another, we are led, by the ſoundeſt maxims of reaſon and good ſenſe, to maintain, that it is his will that they ſhould act conformably to the relations they bear to him. To ſuppoſe a rational creature, a moral agent, to be obliged to have a regard to his fellow-creatures, beings of the ſame ſpecies with himſelf, and to be under no obligation to have any regard to his Maker, the God and Father of all, would be a manifeſt irregularity and deformity in the moral ſyſtem. As nothing can be more abſurd and contrary to truth and reaſon, than to deny that there is a God, ſo nothing can be more unbecoming a rational creature, than to live as without God in the world, and to ſhew no more regard to him than if there was no ſuch Being.

Nor is it any valid objection againſt this, that God is infinitely happy in himſelf, and therefore ſtandeth not in need of any homage or duty we can render to him, and is not capable of receiving any benefit from our ſervices. For this would be to make the very perfection and excellency of his nature, and the greatneſs of his majeſty and dominion, an argument for neglecting him, and ſhewing no regard to him at all. God's being perfectly happy in himſelf is no reaſon for his not requiring of his reaſonable creatures, ſuch duties as the nature of things, and the relation between him and them, make it fit for him to require and for them to perform. And what can be in itſelf more fit and

reaſonable, and more agreeable to the rules of order, than that reaſonable beings, who derive their exiſtence and faculties, and all the bleſſings they enjoy from God, and whom he hath made capable of contemplating, ſerving, and adoring him, ſhould render him that religious veneration and ſubmiſſion, that love and gratitude, that adoration and obedience, which is moſt juſtly due to their Creator, Preſerver, and Benefactor, the Parent and Lord of the Univerſe?

To what hath been offered concerning Religion in general, it may not be improper to add the ſuffrage of two noble writers of great abilities, and who were certainly no friends to ſuperſtition. The one is the Earl of Shafteſbury, who ſays, "man is not "only born to virtue, friendſhip, honeſty, and faith, but to "Religion, piety, and a generous ſurrender of his mind to what "happens from the ſupreme cauſe or order of things, which he "acknowledges entirely juſt and perfect (*a*)." The other is the late Lord Bolingbroke, who acknowledges, that "man is a reli-"gious as well as ſocial creature, made to know and adore his "Creator, to diſcover and obey his will——Greater powers of "reaſon and means of improvement have been meaſured out to "us than to other animals, that we might be able to fulfil the "ſuperior purpoſes of our deſtination, whereof Religion is un-"doubtedly the chief——and that in theſe the elevation and pre-"eminence of our ſpecies over the inferior animals conſiſts (*b*)."

(*a*) Characteriſt. vol. III. p. 224. Edit. 5.

(*b*) Bolingbroke's Works, vol. V. p. 470. See alſo Ibid. p. 340. 390, 391. Edit. 4to.

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As certain therefore as it is that man had an intelligent and wiſe author of his being (*c*), ſo certainly may we conclude, that he originally formed and deſigned him for Religion. And if ſo, it is reaſonable to think, that whenever he formed man he put him at his firſt creation into an immediate capacity of anſwering this end of his being, and entering on a life of Religion. Two ſuppoſitions may be here made, one of which muſt unavoidably be admitted. Either it muſt be ſaid, that God at his firſt formation only gave him faculties and powers whereby he is capable of Religion, but left him entirely to himſelf to acquire the knowledge of Religion and his duty, by the mere force of his own unaſſiſted reaſon and experience: or, it muſt be ſuppoſed, that the wiſe author of his being, at his firſt creation, communicated to him ſuch a knowledge of Religion, as enabled him immediately to know his Maker, and the duty required of him: in which caſe it cannot be denied, that the firſt notions and diſcoveries of Religion came to the parents of the human race by immediate Revelation from God himſelf.

The former of theſe ſuppoſitions appears to me very improbable, and not conſiſtent with the beſt ideas we can form of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, and the care he muſt be ſuppoſed to exerciſe towards man at his firſt creation. It is moſt reaſon-

(*c*) A celebrated writer hath juſtly obſerved, that there cannot be a greater abſurdity than to ſuppoſe beings, who have reaſon and intelligence, to proceed from a blind unintelligent cauſe. C'eux qui ont dit qu'une fatalitè aveugle a produit tous les effets que nous voyons dans le monde, ont dit une grande abſurditè. Car quelle plus grande abſurditè qu'une fatalitè aveugle, qui auroit produit des etres intelligens? L'Eſprit des loix, vol. I. chap. i. in the beginning.

able

able to ſuppoſe, that the firſt men (and the argument will equally hold, whether we ſuppoſe one or more men to have been originally created) was formed in an adult ſtate: for to have brought him into the world in a ſtate of infancy, and left him to himſelf without any one to take care of him, or any parents to nouriſh and ſupport him, would have been to expoſe him deſtitute and helpleſs to certain miſery and death. And if he was firſt formed in an adult ſtate, it is not reaſonable to think that ſo noble a creature, endued by his Maker with ſuch excellent faculties, capable, if duly inſtructed, of attaining to a high degree of knowledge, ſhould be thruſt out into the world, like a huge overgrown infant, perfect indeed in his bodily form and conſtitution, but with a mind utterly unfurniſhed; having ſenſible ideas and appetites to fit him for a brutal life, like the inferior animals, but deſtitute of that knowledge and thoſe ideas, which were neceſſary to enable him to anſwer the higher purpoſes of his deſtination. And what made his caſe more particular and different from that of thoſe who were afterwards born into the world, he had no human parents, nor inſtructors of his own ſpecies, which is the ordinary way by which men, in the preſent ſtate, receive the firſt rudiments of knowledge.

If it be ſaid he might ſoon, by the force of his own reaſon, and the exerciſe of his intellectual faculties, acquire a ſufficient knowledge of God, and of his duty, and conſequently of true Religion, as far as it was neceſſary for him to know it: I anſwer, that though the main principles of all Religion, eſpecially thoſe relating to the exiſtence, the unity, the perfections, and providence

of God, when once clearly propoſed to the human mind, with their proper proofs and evidences, and thoroughly examined and enquired into, are perfectly agreeable to the moſt improved reaſon and underſtanding of man, yet it can hardly be ſuppoſed, that the firſt man or men, if left to themſelves without any inſtruction or information, would have been able to have formed, in a ſhort time, a right ſcheme of Religion for themſelves, founded upon thoſe principles. The arguing the Being, the Unity, and Attributes of God from the works of nature, and the harmony and order of the Univerſe, by a chain of reaſonings and deductions, ſeems to be a taſk not very fit for the firſt of men, when rude and uncultivated. It is an obſervation of the Baron de Monteſquieu, that "the law which imprinted the idea of a Creator, "and preſcribes our duty to him, is the firſt of natural laws in "dignity and importance, but not in the order of laws—It is "clear, that in the ſtate of nature, man's firſt ideas would not be "of a ſpeculative kind: he would firſt think how to preſerve his "own being, before he ſearched into the original of his being." I think, this muſt be allowed, ſuppoſing man, at his firſt formation, to have been left merely to himſelf without inſtruction. It would probably have been a long time before he raiſed his thoughts to things ſpiritual and inviſible, and attained to ſuch a knowledge and contemplation of the works of nature, as to have inferred from thence the neceſſary exiſtence of the one only true God, and his infinite perfections. So that to have left him to himſelf, in the circumſtances he was then in, to find out all truths moral and divine, which it concerned him to know, merely by his own reaſon, without farther inſtruction, would have been to have left him

him for a long time after his firſt formation without the knowledge of God and divine things, without Religion, and conſequently incapable of living up to the higheſt end of his Being. Suppoſing the firſt man or men to have been mere ſavages, it might have been ages before they came to a right knowledge of Religion, or to form juſt ideas concerning it. Or, if man at his firſt creation be ſuppoſed to have had an excellent underſtanding and powers of reaſon, yet if his mind at his firſt formation had been without any ideas but what he gradually acquired, he muſt have been a long time before he attained to the knowledge of divine and inviſible things, or could form a language capable of expreſſing and communicating thoſe ideas (*d*).

Though I am far from approving the account given by Mr. Hume of the original of Religion, yet I cannot help thinking there is a great deal of force in what that ingenious writer ſays, to ſhew that the firſt men in the earlieſt ages did not come to the knowledge of the exiſtence and perfections of God by rational diſquiſitions and deductions from the works of nature. He obſerves, that "if men had been left to themſelves, and the natural "progreſs of the human mind, they could not at firſt ſtretch "their conceptions to that perfect Being, who beſtowed order on "the whole frame of nature. The mind riſes gradually from "the inferior to the ſuperior——As nothing could diſturb the na-"tural progreſs of thought, but ſome obvious and invincible ar-

(*d*) If we ſuppoſe man to have been created at firſt with innate ideas of God and Religion, this is, in effect, to acknowledge that God revealed them to him, and that from him his knowledge of Religion was derived.

" gument, which might immediately lead the mind into the pure " principles of Theiſm, and make it overleap, at one bound, the " vaſt interval which is interpoſed between the human and di- " vine nature. I allow, continues he, that the order and frame " of the Univerſe, when accurately examined, affords ſuch an " argument; yet I can never think that this conſideration could " have any influence on mankind, when they formed their firſt " notions of Religion——A neceſſitous animal, preſſed with nu- " merous wants and paſſions, has no leiſure to admire the regular " face of nature, and to make enquiries into the cauſes of the " courſe of things (*e*)."

Particularly with regard to that great principle of true Religion, the Unity of God, or that there is one only God and Father of all, this is not ſo eaſily demonſtrable, as neceſſarily to engage the aſſent of the firſt men, untutored in learning and philoſophy. That the works of nature, which we behold, owed their original to wiſdom and contrivance, and to ſome intelligent cauſe or cauſes, and were not the mere effects of chance, or a blind unintelligent nature, may ſeem clear, when duly propoſed, to a common ſound underſtanding: But whether there might not be more cauſes and authors of the ſeveral parts of the Univerſe than one, to the mere natural reaſon of men, who have made no great progreſs in metaphyſical enquiries, is not ſo evident. Mr. Hume indeed urges, that " were men led into the apprehenſions of in-

(*e*) Hume's Diſſertation on the Natural Hiſtory of Religion, p. 5, 6, yet he owns, that " when the contemplation is ſo far enlarged, as to contemplate the firſt " riſe of this viſible ſyſtem, we muſt adopt with the ſtrongeſt conviction the idea " of ſome intelligent cauſe or author." ibid. p. 112.

" viſible

" viſible intelligent power, by a contemplation of the works of " nature, they could never poſſibly entertain any conceptions, but " of one ſimple Being, who beſtowed exiſtence and order on this " vaſt machine, and adjuſted all its parts according to one regular " plan, or connected ſyſtem." But, upon this ſuppoſition, the perſon who forms this concluſion muſt be able to regard this vaſt Univerſe as a well-connected ſyſtem, one ſtupendous machine, all the parts of which are admirably adjuſted to one another, ſo as to conſtitute one regular orderly harmonious Whole. And this is a point which requires much more knowledge, more extenſive diſquiſitions and views, than generally fall to the ſhare of the bulk of mankind, or than thoſe have leiſure or capacity to attend to, who are not accuſtomed to abſtracted metaphyſical ſpeculations. If men were left merely to themſelves without any other guide, they might be apt to imagine a multiplicity of cauſes and authors; and that the moſt conſpicuous parts of the Univerſe, which they might ſuppoſe to be diſtinct worlds, had different authors and architects. Lord Bolingbroke obſerves, that " though " the firſt men could doubt no more that there is ſome cauſe of " the world, than that the world itſelf exiſted, yet in conſequence " of this great event, and of the ſurprize, ignorance, and inex- " perience of mankind, there muſt have been much doubt and " uncertainty concerning the firſt cauſe.—The variety of phæ- " nomena which ſtruck their ſenſes, would lead them to imagine " a variety of cauſes *(f)*."

(f) Bolingbroke's Works, vol. III. p. 253. 259, 260. Edit. 4to. And he expreſſes himſelf to the ſame purpoſe, vol. IV. p. 21.

It is probable, from what has been ſaid, that the firſt men did not acquire the knowledge of God and Religion by the mere force of their own reaſon. And ſince it may be juſtly laid down as a principle, that man was originally formed and brought into the world by a wiſe and good as well as powerful Author, it is congruous to ſuppoſe, that he made diſcoveries of himſelf and of his will to his yet innocent creature; and furniſhed him immediately with ideas of the things which it moſt nearly concerned him to know; eſpecially of thoſe things, which lie at the foundation of all Religion, and without ſome notion of which he could not be in a proper capacity to anſwer the chief end of his Being. Such are the important truths relating to the exiſtence and attributes of God, the creation of the world, his governing Providence, his being a rewarder of thoſe that faithfully ſerve and obey him, and a puniſher of evil doers; which ſuppoſes his having given a law to mankind for the rule of their obedience. And indeed this neceſſarily follows from God's having made man a moral agent, capable of being governed by laws. And as a law is not obligatory, unleſs promulgated, and made known, it is reaſonable to believe, that when God firſt placed man in the world, he made a plain declaration of the duty required of him, and did not leave him, at his firſt coming into the world, to collect his duty merely in a way of reaſoning from the nature and fitneſs and relations of things. This was a work for which, thro' want of knowledge, obſervation, and experience, he could not be ſuppoſed to be well qualified, except God ſhould extraordinarily interpoſe for his inſtruction.

This,

This, which in ſpeculation is a moſt reaſonable hypotheſis, appears, from the account given by Moſes, to have been true in fact. His hiſtory, abſtracting from his authority as an inſpired writer, of which yet we have ſufficient proof, contains the beſt and moſt authentick relation of the firſt age of the world which is any where to be met with. The account he gives of the origin of the human race from a firſt pair, one man and one woman, both of them created by God in an adult ſtate, endued with knowledge and language, immediately capable of converſing with their Maker and with one another, is worthy of God, and honourable to mankind. It is infinitely ſuperior to the mean and ſenſeleſs accounts of the origination of Mankind given by the ancient Egyptians, according to Diodorus, and afterwards by the Epicureans, and others who called themſelves philoſophers. The hiſtory Moſes gives us of the firſt ages of the world before the flood is very ſhort: But it ſufficiently appears from it, that the firſt parents of the human race were brought into the world, not in an helpleſs infant ſtate, but in a ſtate of maturity, placed in an happy ſituation, and in advantageous circumſtances for preſerving their purity and innocence: and that to ſupply their want of obſervation and experience, God was pleaſed, in his great goodneſs, to favour them with extraordinary notices and ſignifications of his will and of their duty. Some few particulars are mentioned, which ſhew that God made diſcoveries of himſelf to our firſt parents and gave them laws. Of this kind was God's bleſſing and ſanctifying the Sabbath day. This ſuppoſes that he communicated to our firſt parents the knowledge of the creation of the world, of which this was deſigned to be a ſolemn memorial:

morial: That the heavens and heavenly bodies, the earth and all things that are therein, and particularly their own bodies and ſouls, as well as all other animals, were the productions of his power, wiſdom, and goodneſs. A moſt important point of knowledge this! And which included in it the belief and acknowledgment of the exiſtence, the perfections and attributes of the one true God, the ſupreme and abſolutely perfect Being. Moſes alſo gives an account of the early inſtitution of marriage, and law concerning it, which, though repreſented as ſpoken by Adam, yet, conſidering how ſoon this happened after the creation, and how little knowledge he could then have attained to by his own experience, muſt have been divinely revealed to him: eſpecially ſince it contained directions in this matter, which were to be a rule to future ages. He alſo informs us, that there was a particular law given to our firſt parents concerning their not eating the forbidden fruit, which, whatever objections ſome have made againſt it, was very properly ſuited to the condition and circumſtances in which they were then conſtituted (*g*). He acquaints

(*g*) I have elſewhere vindicated the Moſaick account of man's original dignity and of his fall, againſt the objections advanced by Dr. Tindal and others. Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, vol. II. chap. xv. And as to the particular injunction which Moſes tells us was laid upon our firſt parents by way of trial of their obedience, it is no hard matter to ſhew, that it had nothing in it unbecoming the ſupreme wiſdom and goodneſs. For ſince God was pleaſed to conſtitute man lord of this inferior creation, and had given him ſo large a grant, and ſo many advantages, it was manifeſtly proper that he ſhould require ſome particular inſtance of homage and fealty, to be a memorial to man of his dependence, and an acknowledgment on his part that he was under the dominion of an higher Lord, to whom he owed the moſt abſolute ſubjection and obedience. And what properer inſtance of homage could there be in the circumſtances man was then in, than his being obliged

quaints us with the declaration and effects of the divine diſpleaſure againſt them for their diſobedience, and the original promiſe made to them to keep them from ſinking under deſpondency: the true meaning and deſign of which was no doubt more diſtinctly explained to our firſt parents, than is mentioned in that ſhort account. By it God gave them to underſtand, that though they had ſuffered themſelves to be drawn into ſin and diſobedience by the tempter, he would, in his great goodneſs, provide a glorious deliverer, who was to proceed from the woman, to break the power of the enemy that had tempted them, and to reſcue them from the miſeries and ruins they had brought upon themſelves by their apoſtaſy. And it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that they had hopes given them, that though they and their poſterity were ſtill to be ſubject to many evils and to temporal death, as the effects and puniſhments of ſin, yet upon their repentance and ſincere obedience, they were to be raiſed to a better life. And accord-

obliged, in obedience to the divine command, to abſtain from one or more of the delicious fruits of Paradiſe? It pleaſed God to inſiſt only upon his abſtaining from one, at the ſame time that he indulged him in a full liberty as to all the reſt. And this ſerved both as an act of homage to the ſupreme Lord, from whoſe bountiful grant he held Paradiſe and all its enjoyments, and was alſo fitted to teach our firſt parents a noble and uſeful leſſon of abſtinence and ſelf-denial, one of the moſt neceſſary leſſons in a ſtate of probation; and alſo of unreſerved ſubmiſſion to God's authority and will, and an implicit reſignation to the ſupreme wiſdom and goodneſs. It tended to habituate them to keep their ſenſitive appetite in a due ſubjection to the law of reaſon; to take them off from a too cloſe attachment to inferior ſenſible good, and to engage them to place their higheſt happineſs in God alone: And finally, to keep their deſire after knowledge within juſt bounds, ſo as to be content with knowing what was really proper and uſeful for them to know, and not preſume to pry with an unwarrantable curioſity into things which did not belong to them, and which God had not thought fit to reveal. See the View of the Deiſtical Writers, vol. II. p. 144, 145. 3d Edit.

ingly the hope of pardoning mercy, and the expectation of a future ſtate, ſeems to have obtained from the beginning, and to have ſpread generally among mankind in the earlieſt ages, by a moſt antient tradition, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew afterwards. And this is beſt accounted for by ſuppoſing it to have been part of the primitive Religion, derived from the firſt parents of the human race, who had it by immediate Revelation from God himſelf.

That there was an intercourſe between God and man in the firſt ages, and that he then communicated to men the diſcoveries of his will, farther appears from what is related concerning Cain and Abel: as alſo from the high encomium given of Enoch that he walked with God, and the diſtinguiſhing reward conferred upon him for his piety, which exhibited a ſenſible proof of a future ſtate.

As there is great reaſon to think that God communicated the knowledge of the fundamental principles of Religion and moral obligations to the firſt parents of the human race; ſo if this were the caſe, it is rational to conclude that they muſt have been led, both by a ſenſe of duty and by inclination, to communicate that knowledge to their poſterity. For it appears from the original conſtitution of the human nature, and was probably enforced by an expreſs divine command, that the Author of our Beings deſigned, that parents ſhould endeavour to inſtruct their children; this being the ordinary inlet to the firſt rudiments of knowledge, eſpecially with reſpect to the main principles of Religion, and the duties of morality. And the firſt of the human race, who came

immediately

immediately out of the hands of God, muſt have had an authority this way, which none of thoſe of ſucceeding generations, in the ordinary courſe of things, could have. The world was juſt made, the Creation freſh in memory, and the communications of God to men frequent and ſenſible. Nor could their children have the leaſt juſt grounds to ſuſpect the veracity of their information, or that they had any intention to impoſe upon them. They needed none of thoſe credentials, which were afterwards neceſſary, when there had been falſe pretences to Revelation in oppoſition to the true. They delivered what they themſelves knew to be true, and what they had received from God; and it muſt have come from them with a peculiar weight, and ought to have been received with great veneration and an entire credit. And the long lives of the firſt man and his immediate deſcendants (*b*) gave them a ſingular advantage for preſerving and propagating thoſe traditions. It is eaſy to conceive, that they might, without much difficulty, be tranſmitted to Noah the ſecond father of mankind. Methuſelah was cotemporary with Adam about 245 years, and with Noah 600 years. And as Noah himſelf was a man of eminent piety and virtue, and lived 600 years

(*b*) Joſephus, ſpeaking of the long lives of men in the firſt ages, as recorded by Moſes, concludes with ſaying—"I have for witneſſes all thoſe that have written "antiquities both among Greeks and Barbarians." He particularly mentions Manetho and Berofus, Moſchus, Heſtiæus, Hieronymus the Egyptian, thoſe who compoſed the Phœnician hiſtory, Heſiod alſo and Hecatæus, and Hellanicus and Aceſilaus. And beſides theſe, Ephorus and Nicolaus relate that the antients lived a thouſand years. Joſeph. Archæolog. l. i. cap. 3. Mr. Whiſton, in a note upon this paſſage in his Engliſh tranſlation of Joſephus obſerves, that he might have added Varro, who made that enquiry, what the reaſon was that the ancients are ſuppoſed to have lived a thouſand years.

with thoſe of the old world, he would, no doubt, be particularly careful to get a true information of the original principles of Religion delivered to the firſt parents of mankind. We may, therefore, reaſonably conclude, that he retained whatſoever there was of chief importance in the antient primitive Religion. And it is alſo agreeable to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, as well as to the accounts given us by Moſes, to ſuppoſe, that God, who in ſo extraordinary a manner diſtinguiſhed him, and ſaved him from the univerſal deluge, made farther diſcoveries of himſelf and of his will to Noah, to be by him communicated to his deſcendants. And this may be juſtly regarded as a ſecond promulgation of Religion in its main principles to the whole human race. The deluge itſelf, the memory of which could not be ſoon forgotten (*i*), muſt have had a great influence to impreſs men's minds with a ſenſe of Religion and its obligations. It muſt have ſtrengthened their faith in God, who made the earth at firſt, and placed man upon it, and who by this ſtupendous event ſhewed that he had power, if he pleaſed, to deſtroy it. It gave men a ſenſible proof, that he is the Lord of nature, and hath a ſovereign domi-

(*i*) There is no one fact, conſidering its great antiquity, which comes to us better atteſted than the univerſal deluge. Joſephus quotes Beroſus the Chaldean, Hieronymus the Egyptian, who writ the Phœnician antiquities, Nicolaus of Damaſcus, and Mnaſeas: and adds, that a great many more make mention of the ſame. Joſeph. ubi ſupra. The tradition of it hath ſpread through the world, and is preſerved in the memory of all nations: in the continent of America as well as Aſia, in the Eaſt and Weſt Indies, among the Africans and Europeans. See Burneti Telluris Theor. ſacra, l. i. cap. 3. See alſo teſtimonies to this purpoſe collected by Grotius De Verit. Relig. Chriſt. l. i. ſect. 16. and by the learned author of Revelation examined with candour, Part I. Diſſert. 13, 14. And indeed there are many things in the preſent conſtitution of the earth, which ſhew that ſuch a flood there hath been, and that the whole earth was covered with it.

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nion over it, and over all the elements; that his Providence concerneth itſelf with men and their actions; that he is a hater of vice and wickedneſs, and a puniſher of evil doers, and is a lover and rewarder of righteouſneſs, and delivereth thoſe from the greateſt evils, that love and ſerve him in ſincerity. It cannot be reaſonably doubted, that Noah, both when he was in the ark, where he had leiſure and opportunity, and after he came out of it, took care to inſtruct his children and deſcendants in thoſe heads of Religion which he himſelf had received; particularly thoſe relating to the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, the creation of the world, the Providence of God as a rewarder and puniſher, the laws he hath given to mankind, and a future ſtate: ſome notions of which were, by tradition, generally ſpread among the nations.

The ages immediately following the flood cannot be ſuppoſed to have been ages of learning and philoſophy. It is well obſerved by a learned writer, that "the manner of life men led in the "ages next following the diſperſion, and the preſſing neceſſities "they were under, occaſioned their making a very ſlow progreſs "in the ſciences (*k*)." As the wide earth was before them, it may naturally be ſuppoſed, that many of them would wander about ſeeking proper habitations; ſome of whom would remove to countries far diſtant from their firſt ſettlement, and fall by degrees into a rude and ſavage kind of life. They had little leiſure or inclination for ſublime ſpeculations. The arts and ſciences known before the flood were generally loſt with the inventers of

(*k*) De l'Origine des loix, des arts, et des ſciences, tom. i. p. 396, 397.

them,

them, and thoſe that exerciſed them; yet ſtill ſome remains of Religion, ſome notions of a Deity, of a Providence, of a future ſtate, and of the moral differences of things were generally preſerved, even in thoſe parts which became wild and ſavage. It cannot well be ſuppoſed, that in their circumſtances they attained to a notion of theſe things in a way of reaſoning and argument. And therefore it can be attributed to nothing ſo probably as the remains of an antient univerſal tradition derived from the firſt anceſtors of the human race: and which the heads of families that proceeded from Noah, and who had received thoſe principles from him, carried into the ſeveral regions of their diſperſion.

Here it may be proper to take notice of a remarkable paſſage of Plato in the beginning of his third book of laws. He ſpeaks of a deſtruction which happened to men by a flood, and from which very few eſcaped; who were ſhepherds, and abode on the tops of mountains, and became the ſeed of a new generation. He ſays, that cities, civil polities and governments, together with the knowledge of arts, having been loſt and periſhed in the confuſion, the ſucceeding generations of men were for a long time ignorant: that they followed the cuſtoms and manners of their anceſtors, eſpecially in what related to Religion and the Gods; and that they gradually formed themſelves into ſocieties, and had the moſt antient men among them, and the heads of their families, for their leaders and governors.

I think there are here manifeſt traces of the univerſal deluge. The account he gives of it cannot well be applied to a particular inundation,

inundation, confined to Attica, Theſſaly, or Greece, as were thoſe of Deucalion or Ogyges; though the Greeks after their manner blended and confounded them with the traditions they had received concerning the Noachic deluge. Plato ſpeaks of a flood which extended to the greateſt part of mankind. And he ſuppoſes, that thoſe who remained after the deluge ſtill retained ſomething of the cuſtoms and Religion of their fathers, which they tranſmitted to their poſterity. He intimates that there were traditions of this in his time, and introduces the account with this queſtion, "Do the antient traditions ſeem to you to have any truth "in them?" To which he anſwers in the affirmative. But in this as well as other inſtances, the primitive traditions were very much altered and corrupted among the Greeks, and were kept more pure and diſtinct in ſome other nations: of which the teſtimonies of Beroſus in his Chaldean antiquities, and of Lucian in his treatiſe De Dea Syria are remarkable inſtances; whoſe traditionary accounts concerning the flood are in ſeveral reſpects agreeable to that which is given by Moſes.

It may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that in thoſe parts of the world, which were firſt peopled after the flood, and which were neareſt the place where the firſt reſtorers of the human race choſe to reſide, what remained of arts or knowledge, after the univerſal ſhipwreck, were chiefly to be found. There alſo it might be expected, that the greateſt veſtiges of the antient Religion might be traced, as being neareſt the fountain head. And they that were afterwards ſcattered to diſtant parts, would be apt ſooner to lapſe into ignorance and barbariſm. The beſt remains of antient

hiſtory

hiſtory agree in this with the Moſaical accounts; that in the Eaſtern parts of the world, *i. e.* where Noah and his family firſt ſettled after the flood, ſocieties and civil polities were firſt formed, cities built, and arts cultivated. The Eaſt was the ſource of knowledge, from whence it was communicated to the Weſtern parts of the world. There the moſt precious remains of antient tradition were to be found. Thither the moſt celebrated Greek philoſophers afterwards travelled in queſt of ſcience, or the knowledge of things divine and human. And thither the lawgivers had recourſe, in order to their being inſtructed in laws and civil polity.

It is a thing well known, that the wiſdom of the Eaſt conſiſted much in teaching and delivering antient traditions. Diodorus Siculus has a remarkable paſſage concerning the different ways of philoſophizing among the Chaldeans (and it holdeth equally of other Eaſtern nations) and the Greeks. He obſerves, that the former did not give a looſe to their invention as the Greeks did, but were for adhering to the tenets derived by tradition from their antient wiſe men. And indeed this was the oldeſt way of philoſophizing among the Greeks themſelves. The learned Dr. Thomas Burnet has obſerved, that the traditionary philoſophy, which did not depend upon reaſoning and the inveſtigation of cauſes, but upon the primitive doctrine delivered by tradition from their fathers, ſeems to have continued among the Greeks, lower than the times of the Trojan war. Durâſſe mihi videtur ultra Trojana tempora philoſophia traditiva, quæ ratiociniis, et cauſarum explicatione non nitebatur, ſed alterius, generis et originis, doctrinâ primigeniâ et πατροπαραδότω. Archæol. Philoſ. l. i. cap. 6. The ſame

ſame learned author, in the 14th chapter of that book, which treats De Origine Philoſophiæ Barbaricæ, ſpeaking of the ancient ſages and philoſophers among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Æthiopians, Arabians, Indians, ſays, they never ſhewed an inventive genius, ſo as to make it probable that they owed the things they taught to the force of their own reaſon. It was not the manner of the antients to form ſyſtems and theories, and to demonſtrate their doctrine by cauſes and effects. They delivered their tenets ſimply, not in a way of argumentation, but as what ought to be received by the learners or hearers upon the authority of the wiſe men, without doubting or diſputing. He inſtances in the doctrine of the formation of the world out of a chaos, and the conflagration or deſtruction of the world by fire, both which ſpread generally among the antients, but without aſſigning any reaſons to confirm them (*l*). He thinks, therefore, that theſe and

(*l*) I ſhall afterwards take notice of the tradition about the origin of the earth from a chaos. As to the conflagration of the world, it was a doctrine of the higheſt antiquity. It was conſtantly maintained by the Stoicks, but they were not the authors of it. It was taught before them by Heraclitus, Empedocles, and others. And it probably came to the Greeks from the Egyptians and Phœnicians. Zeno himſelf, the father of the Stoicks, was of Phœnician origin. The Egyptians, as Plato informs us, held ſucceſſive deſtructions of the world by deluges and conflagrations. Thus they joined the traditions of the firſt deſtruction of the world by water, and the laſt which ſhall be by fire, together, mixing the traditions, and ſuppoſing thoſe deſtructions to return at certain periods. The poets have likewiſe preſerved the antient tradition of the conflagration of the world, as might be ſhewn from Sophocles, Lucretius, Ovid, Lucan, &c. The Brachmans alſo in India have held from the moſt antient times, and ſtill hold, that the world ſhall be deſtroyed by fire. See Burnet's Telluris Theor. ſacr. l. iii. cap. 2. and his Archæol. l. ii. Appendix. This tradition, like many others, was altered and corrupted, eſpecially by thoſe who, like the Stoicks, ſuppoſed periodical conflagrations and renovations of the world; and ſome of them carried it ſo far as to maintain, that after ſuch

and other things which were generally received, were probably owing to an antient tradition derived from Noah: or they might be a part of the traditions derived to Noah from the Antediluvian Patriarchs, and which were originally communicated, by divine Revelation, to the firſt father of mankind.

The latter Greeks, who had an high opinion of their own wiſdom, were loth to own, that they derived any part of their knowledge from the Barbarians, as they called all other nations but themſelves. Diogenes Laertius blames thoſe who preſumed to ſay, that philoſophy had its riſe among the Barbarians, and affirms, that they ignorantly applied to the Barbarians what the Greeks themſelves had rightly done and invented. His prejudice in favour of the Greeks carries him ſo far as to ſay, that from them not only philoſophy but the human race had its original. Laert. in Procem. Segm. 3. And yet it is a thing certain, and univerſally acknowledged, and which appears from his own accounts, that the moſt celebrated among the antient philoſophers travelled into the Eaſtern countries, Chaldea, Phœnicia, Egypt, Perſia, and ſome of them as far as India, to converſe with the wiſe men of thoſe nations for their improvement in knowledge. A long catalogue is given by Diodorus Siculus of thoſe of them that travelled into Egypt, who had it from the Egyptian prieſts. Plato, in his Epinomis, acknowledges that the Greeks learned many things from the Barbarians, though he aſſerts, that they improved what they

conflagrations, the whole ſeries both of perſons and things ſhould be reſtored exactly in the ſame condition it was in before, and the ſame actions done over again. Orig. cont. Celſ. l. v. p. 245.

thus borrowed, and made it better, eſpecially in what related to the worſhip of the Gods (*m*). That great philoſopher himſelf ſpent ſeveral years in Egypt among the Egyptian prieſts, as Pythagoras, of whom he was a great admirer, had done before. And it has been often obſerved, that there are many things in his writings which he learned in the Eaſt; and that from thence he ſeems to have borrowed ſome of his ſublimeſt notions, though he probably embelliſhed, and added to them by the force of his own genius. There are ſeveral paſſages in his works, in which he repreſents theological truths, as having been derived, not merely from the reaſonings of philoſophers, but from antient and venerable traditions, which were looked upon as of divine original, though he ſometimes intimates that they were mixed with fables. Euſebius, and others of the fathers contend, that all the knowledge of divine things among the Greeks, came originally from the Hebrews. But this ſeems to be a carrying it too far. Some of thoſe things may well be ſuppoſed to have been the remains of antient tradition, derived not merely from the Hebrews, or the Moſaic and Prophetical writings, but from the Patriarchal ages; ſome veſtiges of which continued for a long time, eſpecially among the Eaſtern nations.

The ſeveral conſiderations which have been mentioned, make it highly probable, that Religion firſt entered into the world by Divine Revelation: that it was not merely the reſult of men's own unaſſiſted reaſon, or the effect of learning and philoſophy,

(*m*) Plat. Oper. p. 703. Edit. Ficin. Lugd. 1590.

which had made little progreſs in thoſe early ages: but owed its original to a Revelation communicated from God to the firſt parents of the human race. From them it was delivered down by tradition to their deſcendants: though, in proceſs of time, it became greatly obſcured, and corrupted with impure mixtures.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The firſt Religion of mankind was not Idolatry, but the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God. Some veſtiges of which may be traced up to the moſt antient times. A tradition of the creation of the world continued long among the nations. The notion of one Supreme God was never entirely extinguiſhed in the Pagan world; but his true worſhip was in a great meaſure loſt and confounded amidſt a multiplicity of Idol Deities.

FROM the account which hath been given in the preceding chapter, it may be fairly concluded, that not Idolatry, but the worſhip of the one true God, was the firſt Religion of mankind. But this deſerves to be more diſtinctly conſidered, as it is what ſome are not willing to allow. Mr. Hume, in his Diſſertation on the Natural Hiſtory of Religion, having endeavoured to ſhew, that the firſt men were not qualified to find out the exiſtence and perfections of God, the ſole Creator of the Univerſe, by reaſoning from the works of nature, draws this concluſion from it, that Theiſm was not the firſt Religion of the human race. "If, ſays he, we conſider the improvements of human "ſociety from rude beginnings, to a ſtate of greater perfection, "Polytheiſm and Idolatry was, and neceſſarily muſt have been, "the firſt and moſt antient Religion of mankind," p. 4. And again, he pronounces it "impoſſible that Theiſm could, from "reaſoning, have been the primary Religion of the human "race.

" race ibid. p. 9. (*n*)." But his argument does not prove, that Theiſm, or the acknowledgment and worſhip of one God, was not the Religion of the firſt ages; it only ſhews, that it was not the mere reſult of their own reaſonings: and therefore if it obtained among them, it muſt have been owing to a Divine Revelation originally communicated to the firſt men. And this was the caſe in fact. He ſuppoſes, in the paſſage above quoted from him, to which others might be added, that it was impoſſible that men in the firſt ages of the world, ſhould, if left to themſelves in the circumſtances they were in, have any other Religion than idolatry; and he aſſerts, that they were left to themſelves accordingly, and therefore were neceſſarily idolaters. But I can hardly conceive a greater abſurdity, than to imagine that a wiſe and good God, the parent of mankind, ſhould place them in ſuch circumſtances at their firſt formation, and for many ages afterwards, that they muſt unavoidably either have no Religion at all, or a falſe one; ſo that it was abſolutely impoſſible for them not to be idolaters and polytheiſts. This ſeems to me to caſt the moſt unworthy reflections on Divine Providence. It is far more rational to ſuppoſe, that, through the divine goodneſs, the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race had a knowledge of Religion in its main fundamental principles, communicated to them from God himſelf, at their firſt coming into the world, to put them into an immediate capacity of knowing and adoring their Maker. For in this caſe, if they, or their deſcendants afterwards, fell into polytheiſm and idolatry, it was their own

(*n*) Lord Bolingbroke is of the ſame opinion. See his Works, vol. III. p. 256. 260.

fault;

fault; wholly owing to themſelves, and not chargeable on Divine Providence; ſince there was an original Revelation granted them, which they had it in their power, and were under the ſtrongeſt obligations to tranſmit pure to their poſterity (*n*). But the ſuppoſing mankind at their firſt formation to have been conſtituted in ſuch circumſtances, that it was impoſſible for them to know and worſhip the one true God, the Maker and Lord of the

(*n*) The account which Mr. Hume himſelf gives of the origin of Religion among mankind is very extraordinary. He acknowledgeth, that "there is a conſent of "mankind, almoſt univerſal, in the belief that there is an inviſible intelligent power "in the world." But he gives no ſufficient account, how there came to be ſuch a general conſent of mankind in this belief. He never takes the leaſt notice of a Divine Revelation as having given riſe to it: nor will he allow, that the firſt ideas of Religion aroſe from the contemplation of the works of nature, for which he thinks the firſt men, in the circumſtances they were in, were by no means qualified. Whence then doth he ſuppoſe the firſt notions of Religion to have proceeded? It is "from men's examining into the various and contrary events of human life, and in "this diſorderly ſcene with eyes ſtill more diſordered and aſtoniſhed, they ſee the "firſt obſcure traces of Divinity." Diſſert. on the Nat. Hiſt. of Religion, p. 13, 14, 15. A goodly account this of the firſt original of the idea of God and Religion among mankind! It is true, that when men have once formed a notion of inviſible intelligent powers, they might be apt to attribute to ſuch powers, thoſe events which they could not otherwiſe account for. But the mere conſideration of the fortuitous accidents, as he calls them, of human life, and which they might be apt to attribute to chance, could not give them the firſt notion of ſuperior inviſible power; nor doth it at all account for this notion's having been almoſt univerſal among mankind, as he owns it to have been. According to his ſcheme, *Elves and Fairies*, to which he compareth the Heathen Deities, muſt have been the firſt Gods of the human race. Whereas it appeareth from the beſt accounts of the moſt antient times, that the worſhip of the one true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, was the firſt Religion of mankind, and that the firſt idolatry, or deviation from the primitive Religion, was the worſhip of heaven and the heavenly bodies; to which they were led by their admiration of them, and by conſidering their ſplendor and influence on this lower world. Mr. Hume's account of the origin of Religion among mankind is founded in his own imagination, without any authority or reaſon to ſupport it.

Univerſe:

Univerſe: *i. e.* to fulfil the principal end of their being; and that Idolatry and Polytheiſm was the neceſſary reſult of the ſtate they were at firſt placed and long continued in; this is laying the blame of their falſe Religion and Polytheiſm, not upon themſelves, but upon God, and making him the proper author of it. The hypotheſis, therefore, that Polytheiſm and Idolatry was not the firſt original Religion of mankind, but only the corruption of it, is far more agreeable to reaſon, and more conſiſtent with the beſt notions we can form of the wiſdom and goodneſs of Divine Providence.

And this, which is moſt agreeable to reaſon, is alſo moſt conformable to the beſt accounts which are given us of the antient ſtate of mankind. Mr. Hume indeed appeals to fact, that "all "mankind, a very few excepted, were idolaters from the begin-"ning, and continued ſo till 1700 years ago: and that the farther "we mount up into antiquity, the more we find mankind "plunged into idolatry: no marks or ſymptoms of a more per-"fect Religion." But if by idolatry he means, which ſeems to be what he intends by it, that mankind, from the beginning of the world, were abſolutely without any knowledge or notion of the one ſupreme God, his aſſertion is not true. A notion of a ſupreme Deity continued for a long time among the idolatrous Heathens themſelves, and never was entirely extinguiſhed, tho' greatly obſcured and corrupted. And the ſame may be obſerved concerning many of thoſe whom Mr. Hume calls the ſavage tribes of America: and indeed idolatry, in its firſt beginning, was not an utter caſting off the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God,

God, but the worſhipping him in a ſuperſtitious manner, and the joining with him, under various pretences, other objects of worſhip, to whom at firſt they rendered an inferior degree of religious reſpect, but at length came to render them that divine adoration which was only due to the Supreme.

The moſt authentic hiſtory of the firſt ages of the world, as hath been already hinted, is that of Moſes; who is the moſt antient hiſtorian, and the moſt to be depended upon of any now extant. For as to the extravagant antiquities of the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and Chineſe, the fabulouſneſs and abſurdity of them has been often ſufficiently expoſed, and has been ſo very lately, by the learned and ingenious Mr. Goguet, in his 3d Diſſertation at the end of his 3d tome, De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences. And from the account given by Moſes it appeareth, that the worſhip of the one true God was the religion of the firſt anceſtors of the human race, and that idolatry and polytheiſm came in afterwards. And the farther the nations were removed from the earlieſt ages, the more they degenerated from the primitive religion; and the ancient and original traditions became more and more corrupted.

The nations which made the greateſt figure in the moſt antient times were the Aſſyrians and Chaldeans, the Perſians, Phœnicians, Arabians, and Egyptians; and there is great reaſon to think, that among all or moſt of theſe the worſhip of the one true God was preſerved for ſome ages after the Flood (*o*). To theſe might

(*o*) See Shuckford's Connect. of ſacred and prophane hiſtory, vol. i. p. 282, &c. 303, et ſeq.

be added the antient Chineſe, according to the accounts given of them by F. Matthew Riccius and others, and eſpecially by F. Le Compte, in his memoirs of China. This laſt-mentioned author affirms, That the people of China preſerved the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and the purity of religion among them for two thouſand years. And it muſt be owned, that there are ſome paſſages in the moſt antient Chineſe books, which, taken in the moſt obvious ſenſe, ſeem to favour this hypotheſis. But as this is contradicted by the Chineſe themſelves, who give a different account of the true ſenſe of thoſe books, as well as by ſome learned Chriſtians well verſed in the Chineſe language and literature (*p*), I ſhall not lay any great ſtreſs

(*p*) The propoſitions in Le Compte's Memoires relating to the antient religion of the Chineſe, were cenſured by the ſuperiors of the ſeminary of foreign miſſions at Paris, and afterwards by the faculty of divinity there, in their deciſions of Oct. 18, 1700. Some of the Jeſuits themſelves have alſo given different accounts of the antient religion of China; particularly F. Nicholas Longobardi, who lived many years in China, and was well acquainted with their books and learning. The reader may conſult his treatiſe on this ſubject, which takes up the whole fifth book of F. Navarette's account of the empire of China. See alſo Millar's Hiſtory of the Propag. of Chriſt. vol. ii. p. 281, 282. edit. 3d. "As to my own ſentiments in "this matter, it ſeems to me not improbable, that the Chineſe as well as the "Perſians, and ſome other eaſtern nations, had ſome knowledge of the one true God "among them in the moſt antient times; eſpecially as their firſt rulers and law-"givers ſeem to have been among the earlieſt deſcendants of Noah. But there "is reaſon to think that their religion ſoon began to be corrupted, and that they "early fell into the worſhip of the heaven, the earth, the elements, the moun-"tains, rivers, and other parts of nature; to which, at leaſt, conſidered as ani-"mated by the ſpirits they ſuppoſed to be intimately united to them and inſe-"parable from them, they offered ſacrifices, from a very remote antiquity. This, "I think, may be fairly gathered from the acknowledgments of ſome of thoſe "who are willing to give the moſt favourable accounts of them. See the "Scientia Sinenſis latine expoſita, publiſhed by four Jeſuits, lib. ii. p. 51. Paris, "1686."

upon

upon it. As to the ancient Perſians, they ſeem to have been adorers of the one true God in the earlieſt times. Dr. Hyde thinks they learned this from Noah, and their great progenitors Shem and Elam: and that though they afterwards fell into Sabiiſm, or the worſhip of the heavenly bodies, yet they ſtill retained the knowledge and worſhip of the Supreme Deity, and that religion in ſeveral reſpects was leſs corrupted among them than among many other of the Gentile nations (*q*). The Chaldeans and Aſſyrians ſeem to have been among the firſt corrupters of the true antient religion. It is intimated, Joſh. xxiv. 3. that Terah, Abraham's father, and even Abraham himſelf, had been infected with their idolatries. "Thus ſaith the Lord God, Your fathers dwelt on the other ſide of "the flood," i. e. of the river Euphrates, "in old time: Terah, the "father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor, and they" (by whom we are probably to underſtand Terah, Abraham, and Nachor) "ſerved other Gods." It can ſcarce be ſuppoſed, that they were ſo far corrupted, as intirely to lay aſide the knowledge and adoration of the one ſupreme God. But they paid alſo an inferior kind of worſhip to other deities. From which however they were afterwards reformed: and according to a tradition ſtill current among the

(*q*) There is a noble paſſage concerning God produced by Euſebius *, from a book aſcribed to Zoroaſter. If this paſſage be genuine, and that this Zoroaſter was of ſo great antiquity as ſome ſuppoſe him to have been, he lived early in the Patriarchal times, and may be ſuppoſed to have preſerved conſiderable remains of the antient primitive religion, as being not far from the fountain head. Or, if he was as late as the reign of Darius Hyſtaſpes, where Dr. Hyde after the Perſian and Arabian hiſtorians places him, he derived his notions of God, as well as ſome other parts of his religion, from the Moſaic and Prophetical writings, as that very learned writer has ſhewn.

* Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 10. p. 42. A.

eaſtern nations, Abraham endeavoured to promote a reformation among the Chaldeans. But, if what is ſaid of this matter in the book of Judith can be depended on, the Chaldeans caſt them out; ſo that they were obliged to flee into Meſopotamia, where they ſojourned many days (*r*). From thence, after Terah's death, Abraham, by divine commandment, removed into Canaan. But ſtill ſome of his brother Nachor's family remained in Meſopotamia. And near two hundred years after this, by the account which is given us of Laban and his family, it appears, that the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was ſtill retained in thoſe parts, though mixed with ſome ſuperſtitious and idolatrous uſages. As to the Phœnicians and Canaanites, it muſt be acknowledged, that they were over-run with idolatry and polytheiſm in the days of Moſes: but 400 years before, when Abraham ſojourned among them, no traces of idolatry are to be found in the account given of them in the Moſaic hiſtory. The contrary rather appeareth from what is ſaid of Melchiſedek, a king in that country, who was alſo a prieſt of the moſt High God, and to whom Abraham himſelf ſhewed great reſpect, and gave the tenth part of the ſpoils he had taken. Abimelech, who was likewiſe a king in Canaan about the ſame time, ſeems to have had a knowledge of the true God, and to have been a worſhipper of him. Nor is there the leaſt hint of any difference between Abraham and the inhabitants of thoſe parts on the account of religion, or any diſturbance given him on that head. He ſeems rather to have been regarded among them as a Prophet of the Moſt High, and a perſon much in the favour of God. The ſame may obſerved

(*r*) Judith, chap. v. verſ. 6, 7, 8.

with

with regard to the treatment he met with from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It does not appear, that they were as yet infected with thoſe idolatries, for which they became afterwards ſo famous. And it ſeems by what is ſaid of Pharaoh, that he was not abſolutely a ſtranger to the true religion. And probably it was not intirely corrupted in the times of Joſeph, as may be gathered from the particular reſpect he ſhewed to their prieſts, and from his marrying a prieſt's daughter. And if what we are told of the antient inhabitants of Thebais is to be depended upon, they ſeem to have preſerved for a long time the primitive religion, as conſiſting in the worſhip of the one God, the Creator of the world, whom they worſhipped under the name of Kneph, when the other parts of Egypt were over-run with idolatry (*s*). Of the antient religion of the Arabians, the book of Job, who lived after the days of Abraham, is a noble monument. It abounds with the ſublimeſt notions of the Divinity, and which are there repreſented as delivered down from perſons of great antiquity: though it is alſo there intimated, that the idolatrous worſhip of the heavenly bodies was then beginning to be introduced in thoſe parts (*t*).

I would obſerve by the way, that it may be collected from the Moſaic accounts, that God was pleaſed to manifeſt himſelf on ſeveral occaſions to particular perſons in thoſe antient times, as

(*s*) Plut. De Jud. et Oſir. oper. tom. ii. p. 259. D. Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iii. cap. 11. p. 115.

(*t*) See the antiquity of the book of Job vindicated, in the Second Diſſertation at the end of the firſt tome De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, &c.

appears

appears not only from the inſtances of Abraham, Iſaac (*u*), Jacob, and Joſeph, but of Abimelech, Pharaoh, Laban, and others. And there are ſeveral paſſages in the antient book of Job, which ſhew that it was no unuſual thing in thoſe days for God to favour the ſincere adorers of the Deity with extraordinary diſcoveries of his will, for their direction and guidance, and for preſerving a ſenſe and knowledge of religion among men (*x*). And it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed that it was ſo, not only in thoſe countries where Job and his friends lived, but among other nations in thoſe early times, where there were good and pious perſons, fearers of God and workers of righteouſneſs. And thus probably it continued, till, by their increaſing idolatries and impieties, the nations rendered themſelves utterly unworthy of thoſe divine communications, and were in God's juſt judgment left to walk in their own ways. It was probably ſome traditionary accounts of theſe things which gave reputation to Oracles: though this, as well as other advantages they had enjoyed, was greatly abuſed to ſuperſtition.

The learned Dr. Shuckford obſerves, that there continued for a long time among the nations, uſages which ſhew that there had been an antient univerſal religion, ſeveral traces of which appeared in the rites and ceremonies which were obſerved in reli-

(*u*) We are told, that Rebecca went to "enquire of the Lord" concerning the children which ſtruggled in her womb: which ſeems to ſhew, that there was at that time in Canaan a prophet or prophets diſtinct from Abraham and Iſaac, to whom perſons might have recourſe to know the will of God. And accordingly the anſwer ſhe received contained a ſignal prophecy. Gen. xxv. 22, 23.

(*x*) Job iv. 12—20. xxxiii. 14, 15, &c.

gious

gious worſhip. Such was the cuſtom of ſacrifices, expiatory and precatory, both the ſacrifices of animals (*y*), and the oblations of wine, oil, and the fruits and products of the earth; altars were erected, and pillars, ſuch as that ſet up by Jacob, who poured oil upon it, and thereby conſecrated it to God. Theſe and other things which were in uſe among the patriarchs, obtained alſo among the Gentiles, and were probably intended originally to the honour of the true God, but afterwards transferred to idol deities (*z*).

To this ſome learned perſons have added, that the ſeventh day ſeems for a long time to have been diſtinguiſhed among the nations, and to have had a peculiar ſacredneſs aſcribed to it (*a*). Mr. Selden indeed has taken great pains to ſhew, that the ſeventh day mentioned by pagan writers is to be underſtood of the ſeventh day of the month: and that there is no proof of the religious obſervance of the ſeventh day of the week among the antient Gentiles. Yet it is plain from that very learned writer's own accounts, that there was a particular regard paid by them to the number ſeven, and that the numbering days by weeks, conſiſting of ſeven days, was of great antiquity, eſpecially among the

(*y*) It appears from the inſtances of Cain and Abel, and afterwards of Noah, the ſecond father of mankind, that ſacrifices were made uſe of as a rite of religious worſhip from the firſt ages. And its having ſpread ſo univerſally among the nations, can ſcarce be any other way accounted for, than by a moſt antient and general tradition derived from the firſt of the human race. And good reaſons may be offered to make it probable, that it was not their own invention, but owed its original to a divine inſtitution.

(*z*) Shuckford's Connect. of ſacred and prophane hiſtory, vol. i. p. 301, et ſeq.

(*a*) Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. xiii. cap. 12, et 13.

eaſtern

eaſtern nations (*b*). And I think a more probable account cannot be given of it, than that it was originally derived from a tradition of the hiſtory of the creation, and of a ſeventh day ſet apart, by divine appointment, in commemoration of it: though, like other antient traditions, it came in proceſs of time to be neglected, and the true original deſign of it loſt and forgotten. It cannot be denied however, that there remained for many ages among the nations, ſome remarkable veſtiges of the hiſtory of the creation. It was generally believed, both that the world had a beginning, and that it was made out of a chaos or diſorderly maſs. This is agreeable to the account given by Moſes, not that the nations generally took it from his writings, but from a tradition derived from the firſt ages (*c*). For, as Dr. Burnet obſerves, the remembrance of their original was ſtill in a manner freſh in the moſt ancient times: "The higher one goes," ſays the learned Monſ. Goguet, "towards the ages neareſt the creation, the more we "find of the viſible traces of this great truth, which the invention "and temerity of man in vain attempted to deface (*d*)." And that ſome notion of this continued for a long time among the Gentiles might be ſhewn from ſeveral teſtimonies. The learned Dr. Hyde obſerves concerning the antient Perſians, that from times immemorial they had ſome knowledge of the hiſtory of the creation: and to this he attributes their having retained more

(*b*) Selden De jure nat. et gent. lib. iii. the 17th and following chapters to the end of that book.

(*c*) Concerning the antiquity and univerſality of this tradition ſee Burnet's Archæologia, lib. ii. cap. i. and his Telluris Theoria Sacra, lib. i. cap. 4. et lib. ii. cap. 7. See alſo Grot. De Verit Relig. Chriſt. lib. i. ſect. 16.

(*d*) De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, &c. tom. ii. p. 451, 452.

of the knowledge of the true religion than many other nations (*e*). Strabo informs us from Megaſthenes, concerning the Indian Brachmans, who were remarkable for their adherence to antient traditions which they had received from their anceſtors, that they believed the world had a beginning, and ſhall be deſtroyed, and that God made and governs it; and that the world was originally formed out of water. And in this he repreſents them as agreeing with the Greeks (*f*). That very antient Greek poet Linus writ a poem on the coſmogonia or generation of the world, which he began thus, as Diogenes Laertius informs us,

Ἦν ποτέ τοι χρόνος ὅτος ἐν ᾧ ἅμα παντ' ἐπιφύκει.

"There was a time when all things roſe at once."

And from him Laertius thinks Anaxagoras took his notion, that all things were mixed together, and Mind came and put them in order (*g*). Thoſe philoſophers who endeavoured to account for the origin of things merely from material and mechanical cauſes, without the intervention of an intelligent cauſe and author, and the poets who turned the coſmogonia, or account of the production of the world, into a theogonia, or an account of the generation of the gods, and confounded the one with the other, were the great depravers of the antient tradition. Yet traces of it ſtill remained among the people, and even among the poets and mythologiſts themſelves; a remarkable inſtance of which we have in Ovid,

(*e*) Hyde Hiſt. vet. Perſar. cap. iii. p. 81.

(*f*) Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1040. Edit. Amſtel.

(*g*) Laert. in Procemio, Segm. 4.

who formed his Metamorphoſes upon antient traditions, and the received mythology. He begins his work with an account of the formation of the world out of a chaos, and has many things ſo agreeable to what Moſes has ſaid of it, that one would be apt to think, that either he himſelf, or the authors whom he followed, had ſeen or heard of the Moſaic account of the creation; which, as appears from Longinus and others, the Pagans were not unacquainted with. But, ſuppoſing this to have been the caſe, he would not have made uſe of it in ſuch a work as the Metamorphoſes, if it had not been agreeable to the antient received traditions. And it is obſervable, that he gives it a Pagan turn. And though he ſuppoſes one God to have been the great agent in the formation of the world, yet he at the ſame time ſuppoſes a plurality of deities, and ſeems to be at a loſs which of them to aſcribe it to.

Beſides what has been ſaid of the tradition of the creation of the world, it may be obſerved, that ſome notion of a ſupreme Deity was generally preſerved among the nations, amidſt all their ſuperſtitions and idolatries, and was never utterly extinguiſhed in the Pagan world; and this is a farther proof of the remains of an antient univerſal religion which had obtained from the beginning. There are ſeveral paſſages in Heathen writers which repreſent the belief and acknowledgment of a Deity as having been derived by a conſtant tradition from the moſt remote antiquity. The author of the book De Mundo, among the works of Ariſtotle, calls it "a certain antient tradition or doctrine derived to all men from

"their fathers." Ἀρχαιος τὶς λόγος καὶ πάτριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις (*h*). And before him Plato, ſpeaking of God's having the beginning, the end, and the middle of things, and being always accompanied with juſtice to puniſh thoſe that tranſgreſs the divine law, repreſents this as what antient tradition, ὁ παλαιος λόγος, teſtifies (*i*). And Plutarch, in his treatiſe De Iſid. et Oſir. ſpeaking of the opinion, that the world is not upheld or carried about by chance, without underſtanding, or reaſon, or a governor, repreſenteth it as an opinion of the utmoſt antiquity, παμπάλαιος δόξα, which had not its original from any known author, τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀδέσποτον ἔχουσα, and was generally ſpread among the Greeks and Barbarians (*k*). The moſt antient legiſlators were not the inventors of it; but finding the notion of a Divinity among the people, made uſe of it to give a greater authority to their laws and inſtitutions. It may be traced up, as was before obſerved, to the firſt parents of the human race, to whom it was communicated by the wiſe and benign Author of their beings. And when once this principle was thus communicated, the ſtanding evidences of a Deity, open to the View of mankind in all ages in his wonderful works, muſt have contributed to keep up the idea of it among the nations. And though it muſt be acknowledged, that they did not make that uſe of thoſe diſcoveries which they might and ought to have done, yet the works of God, which were continually before their eyes, had undoubtedly a tendency to preſerve ſome impreſſions of a Deity upon their minds, which

(*h*) De Mundo, cap. vi. Ariſtot. Oper. tom. I. p. 610. Edit. Paris 1629.
(*i*) Plat. de Leg. lib. IV. Oper. p. 600. G. Edit. Lugd. 1590.
(*k*) Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 369. B. Edit. Francof. 1620.

could never be abſolutely eraſed. I ſhall produce a few teſtimonies to this purpoſe among many which might be mentioned. *Zaleucus*, the *Locrian*, in his celebrated proœmium or preface to his laws, ſaith, that " all thoſe who inhabit the city and country " ought firſt of all to be perſuaded of the exiſtence of the Gods, " eſpecially when they look up to heaven, and contemplate the " world, and the orderly and beautiful diſpoſition of things. For " theſe are not the works of chance or of men. And that they " ought to worſhip and honour them, as the authors of all the " real good things which befal us (*l*)." " It is eaſy," ſaith Clinias, the Cretan, one of Plato's dialogiſts, in his tenth book of laws, " to prove this truth, that there are gods." And when the Athenian hoſpes aſks, " How is it proved?" He anſwers, " In " the firſt place, the earth, the ſun, the ſtars, and τὰ ξύμπαντα, " the whole complexion and conſtitution of things, the well-" ordered variety of ſeaſons, diſtinguiſhed by years and months, " ſhew it: as alſo the conſent of both Greeks and Barbarians, " who all agree that there are Gods (*m*)." Cicero has many paſſages concerning the proofs of a Deity, as being obvious from the works of nature. " Who," ſays he, " is ſo blind, that when he " looks up to the heavens, does not perceive that there are Gods?" Quis eſt tam cæcus, qui cum ſuſpexerit in cælos, non eſſe Deos

(*l*) This excellent Fragment has been preſerved to us by Stobæus. Serm. xiii. The reader may ſee it at large quoted and elegantly tranſlated by the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes: who has alſo well vindicated the genuineneſs of it againſt the objections of a famous critic. Div. Leg. vol. I. book ii. ſect. 3d. p. 112 et ſeq. et 127, 128. 4th edit.

(*m*) Plato De Leg. lib. x. Oper. p. 664. Ficin. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

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ſentiat (*n*)? And in his proem or introduction to his laws he repreſents him as not worthy of the name of a man, "whom the "orderly courſes of the ſtars, the viciſſitudes of days and nights, "the diſtributions and temperature of the ſeaſons, and the vari-"ous things produced out of the earth for our uſe and enjoy-"ment, do not compel to be grateful?" Quem verò aſtrorum ordinis, quem dierum et noctium viciſſitudines, quem menſium temperatio, quemque ea quæ gignuntur nobis ad fruendum, non gratum eſſe cogant, hunc hominem omnino numerare qui deceat (*o*)? And elſewhere, having mentioned ſeveral of the works of nature and providence, he aſks, "How is it poſſible for us, "when we behold theſe and numberleſs other things of the "ſame kind, to entertain a doubt, but that there preſideth over "them ſome Maker of ſo great a work, if theſe things had a "beginning, or a moderator and governor, if, as Ariſtotle ſup-"poſes, they exiſted from eternity." Hæc igitur et alia innumerabilia cum cernimus, poſſumuſne dubitare quin his præfit aliquis vel Effector, ſi hæc nata ſunt ut Platoni videtur, vel ſi ſemper fuerint, ut Ariſtoteli placet, moderator tanti operis et muneris (*p*)? Plutarch, in his treatiſe De Placit. Philoſ. lib. I. cap. vi. reckons the obſervation of the heavenly bodies, their influences, the harmony of their motions, and the effects which they produce, to be one of the principal things which had led men into the notion of a Deity: though it muſt be owned, that he there ſpeaks of men's acknowledging a number of gods; among which he reckons

(*n*) Orat. Harufpic. Reſponſ. p. 9.

(*o*) De Legib. lib. II. cap. vii. p. 95, 96. Edit. Davis, 2d.

(*p*) Tuſcul. Quæſt. lib. I. cap. xxviii. p. 68. Edit. Davis, 4to.

the

the heaven, the earth, the ſun, moon, and ſtars (*q*). I think it appears with great evidence from the ſeveral paſſages which have been produced, to which others might be added, that in the heathen world men were ſenſible of the force of the argument which is drawn from the beauty and order of the works of nature, to the exiſtence and perfections of a Deity. But it is to be obſerved, that though they generally agreed that the formation of things was not owing to chance; yet in moſt of the paſſages here referred to, they do not argue from the works of nature to one only ſupreme Cauſe, but ſeem rather to infer a plurality of deities or intelligent cauſes, as the authors of this ſyſtem. And many paſſages there are of this kind among the antients. It is alſo obſervable, as I ſhall ſhew diſtinctly in another place, that when the Pagan authors, who lived before the times of Chriſtianity, urge the conſent of nations againſt the atheiſts in proof of a Deity, they generally ſpeak of Gods in the plural, and not of one God only. Yet, notwithſtanding their polytheiſm, and the many gods they acknowledged and worſhipped, which was a great and moſt culpable defection from the true primitive religion, they ſtill retained in ſome degree the idea of one ſupreme Divinity. But it muſt be owned, that it ſeemed at length to dwindle into a notion of one God, ſuperior in power and dignity to the reſt, but not of a different kind from the other divinities they adored, whom they looked upon to be really and truly gods as well as he, and ſharers in the ſovereign dominion with him. That this was the general popular notion will appear in the farther progreſs of this work.

(*q*) Plat. Oper. tom. II. p. 880.

It

It is an obſervation of the learned Dr. Cudworth, that though the poets were the great depravers of the true primitive religion and theology among the Pagans, yet they kept up the antient tradition of one ſupreme Deity. Amidſt the crowds of divinities they mention, there is ſtill running through all their writings the notion of One Supreme; of whom they ſpeak in the moſt exalted terms, and to whom they aſcribe the higheſt divine attributes, and which are really peculiar to the one true God; as that he is omnipotent, that he ſeeth all things and governeth the whole world. They often call him the Father Almighty, the Father of gods and men. They deſcribe him as the Univerſal Monarch who ruleth men and the gods too. Several paſſages might be produced to this purpoſe from Homer and others of the Greek poets, who in this are followed by the Latins. The reader may particularly conſult Plautus in the prologue to his Rudens, ver. 9. Virgil, Æneid. lib. x. ver. 2, et 18. Horace, ode xii. lib. i. et lib. iii. ode iv. Other teſtimonies are produced from the poets by that learned writer (*r*). Yet it cannot be denied, that they confounded him whom they repreſented as the ſupreme God, with that Jupiter of whom they told ſuch indecent ſtories, and thus corrupted this great principle of all religion. This however may be gathered from their writings, that the notion of one Supreme Divinity was ſtill preſerved among them, and never utterly extinguiſhed amidſt all the confuſions and perverſions of the Pagan theology.

(*r*) Cudworth's Intel. Syſtem, chap. iv. ſect. 19. p. 355, et ſeq. 2d edit.

I do not now enquire into the ſentiments of the antient philoſophers concerning the one ſupreme God. Theſe will be diſtinctly conſidered in a proper place. I ſhall only obſerve at preſent, that many of them contributed not a little to corrupt this great fundamental article of religion; though ſome of them were of a nobler character, and ſaid excellent things concerning the Deity, at the ſame time that they joined in the public polytheiſm and idolatry.

If from the more polite and civilized parts of the Heathen world, we proceed to enquire how the caſe ſtood with the nations which are uſually looked upon as illiterate and barbarous, we ſhall find that many of them had alſo a notion of one Supreme Divinity; and even ſome of thoſe, from whom one would have leaſt expected it, ſeem to have preſerved the antient tradition in this reſpect more clear, than the nations among whom learning and ſcience flouriſhed.

It was for a long time thought, that the Hottentots, or nations which inhabit the countries about the Cape of Good Hope, had no notion of God at all: but the lateſt and beſt accounts aſſure us, that they believe one Supreme Being. F. Tachart tells us, that in conference with ſome of the moſt intelligent Hottentots, he found that they believed there is a God who made heaven and earth, and cauſeth it to thunder and rain, &c. but did not think themſelves obliged to worſhip him. This is confirmed by other writers of credit, particularly by Mr. Kolben, whoſe accounts of the Hottentots are the moſt exact, and the moſt to be depended upon.

upon. He took particular pains, whilſt he was at the Cape of Good Hope, where he lived ſeveral years, to inform himſelf of their religion and cuſtoms; and affirms, that they believe a Supreme Being, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things that are therein, through whoſe omnipotence all things live and move; and that this Being is endued with unſearchable attributes and perfections; giving him a name which in their language ſignifieth the God of all gods. This may ſeem to argue high ideas of the Divinity. But then it is to be obſerved, that they ſay of this Supreme God, that he is a good man, doing no harm to any body, and dwells far above the moon; and that they pay no diſtinct worſhip to him, though they do to the moon. They alſo worſhip an evil being, whom they look upon to be the father of miſchief, that they may avert his malice (*s*). Conſidering their character, it can hardly be ſuppoſed that their notions of a Supreme Being, as far as they are juſt and right, are the effect of their own reaſoning, to which in matters of religion they are obſerved to have an utter averſion; but muſt have proceeded from the remains of antient tradition, derived to them from their anceſtors, of whoſe opinions and cuſtoms they are very tenacious. There are other old traditions among them, ſome remarkable inſtances of which are mentioned by that author.

The ſame obſervation may be made concerning the Negroes in Guiney. We are told, that they generally acknowledge one Supreme Almighty Being; but believe he is too far above us to

(*s*) See Kolben's Account of the Cape of Good Hope. Engliſh tranſlation. Vol. I. chap. viii.

take notice of poor mortals: and therefore they pay him no manner of adoration; neither praying to him, nor giving him thanks for any thing; but pray and ſacrifice to a multitude of other deities, ſome of which are extremely ridiculous (*t*).

It appears from both antient and modern accounts of India, that there are ſeveral tribes and nations there, who acknowledge and worſhip one Supreme Being, as the original and productive Cauſe of all things: but that this God does not concern himſelf immediately with things of little moment, but has created other gods to be his Vicegerents; and theſe again have their ſubordinate gods, of whom they ſuppoſe an amazing number, to each of whom worſhip is due (*u*).

The people of Ceylon in the Eaſt Indies, as Mr. Knox informs us, who lived there twenty years, worſhip many gods, and even evil ſpirits; leſt they ſhould be deſtroyed by them; yet they acknowledge one God to be the Supreme, whom they call by a name which ſignifies the Creator of heaven and earth; but that he ſends forth inferior gods, to whom he hath committed the care of affairs (*x*). Of theſe there are many images, and they have

(*t*) See Salmon's account of Guiney in his Modern Hiſtory, from Boſman and other authors.

(*u*) Narrative of the Daniſh miſſionaries, part 2d, p. 7, et ſeq. And Phillips's account of the religion, &c. of the people of Malabar.

(*x*) This notion of God's not concerning himſelf with the affairs of this world, but committing them wholly to inferior deities, obtained very generally among the Pagans, and was a principal cauſe of the idolatry which prevailed among them

have prieſts and temples dedicated to them, but none to the Supreme.

As to the people of America, Acoſta tells us, "That this is "common to almoſt all the Barbarians, that they acknowledge a "God ſupreme over all things, and perfectly good:" and he adds, "That therefore they ought to be carefully taught who is "that ſupreme and eternal Author of all things, whom they "ignorantly worſhip.——Hoc commune apud omnes penè bar-"baros eſt, ut Deum quidem omnium rerum ſupremum et "ſummè bonum fateantur—Igitur et quis ille ſummus idemque "ſempiternus rerum omnium opifex, quem ignoranter colunt, "per omnia doceri debunt (*y*)." And Lafeteau in his Mœurs des Sauvages obſerves, that they acknowledge one Supreme Being or Spirit: though he adds, that they confound him with the ſun, whom they call the great ſpirit, the author and maſter of life (*z*). I believe this is true of many of thoſe ſavages, but ſtill it ſhews they had a notion of one Supreme Deity, though they miſapplied

them. For hence it came to paſs, that in proceſs of time their regards and worſhip were almoſt wholly confined to theſe inferior deities, upon whom they thought they immediately depended; whilſt the Supreme God was regarded as little more than an ideal being, and almoſt intirely neglected.

(*y*) Joſ. Acoſta De procuranda Indorum ſalute, lib. v. p. 475, as cited by Cudworth. But though they acknowledged the chief God to be very good, many of them were principally ſollicitous to worſhip an evil being or beings, for fear of their doing them miſchief.

(*z*) So we find in a paſſage, which I ſhall afterwards cite from Macrobius, that the civilized Roman and Greek Pagans, in their ſolemn acts of devotion to the ſun, called him the ſpirit of the world, the power of the world, the light of the world.

it to the ſun. Some of the Americans however ſeem to have had a notion of a Supreme Deity above the ſun. Garcilaſſo de la Vega ſays, that the moſt antient inhabitants of Peru, before the Incas came among them, and whom he repreſents as extremely rude and uncultivated, yet acknowledged one Supreme God, whom they called Pacha Camack; and ſaid, that it was He that gave life to all things, and ſuſtained and preſerved the univerſe; but that as he was inviſible, and they did not ſee him, they could not know him: and therefore to him they ſeldom erected temples, or offered ſacrifices; though they ſhewed their veneration for him by bowing their head, and lifting up their eyes, when his ſacred name was mentioned. One temple however was erected to him, in a valley called the valley of Pacha Camack, which was ſtanding when the Spaniards firſt came into thoſe parts. The Incas made them worſhip the ſun from political views: in conſequence of which Pacha Camack became in a great meaſure neglected. We are told alſo concerning ſome of the inhabitants of Florida, that they worſhip one God, the creator of all things, whom they call Okee: their high prieſts offer ſacrifice to him; but they believe he minds not human affairs himſelf, but commits the government of them to other deities, whom they therefore worſhip, eſpecially the ſun and moon.

Thus it appears, that there are traces of the belief of one Supreme Deity among many different nations in the ſeveral parts of the world, and even among people which are accounted the moſt barbarous; and this can hardly be ſuppoſed to be merely owing to the force of their own reaſoning, deſtitute as they are of.

of learning and improvement. It is moſt natural to aſcribe it to the remains of an antient univerſal religion, which obtained from the beginning, and was derived from the firſt anceſtors of the human race. It muſt be owned, that there have been and are other nations, among whom this great article of the antient religion appears to have been almoſt intirely loſt, and who acknowledged and worſhipped many gods, without ſeeming to have had any diſtinct notion of one God that is abſolutely ſupreme above all the reſt. But not to inſiſt upon this at preſent, I would obſerve, that even in thoſe nations which ſtill retained the notion of a Supreme Deity, this venerable tradition, tho' highly agreeable to reaſon, came at length, through the negligence and corruption of mankind, to be amazingly perverted and depraved. It was covered and overwhelmed, ſo as to be ſcarce diſcernible under a monſtrous load of ſuperſtitions and idolatries. Some nations which acknowledged a Supreme Being rendered him no worſhip at all; in others his worſhip was ſo mixed and confounded with that of idol deities, that ſcarce any traces of it appear in their worſhip, in their religion, and in their laws. The great number of divinities which were introduced from time to time, and the worſhip of which was eſtabliſhed by public authority, turned off their attention and regards from the one true God, ſo that he was in a great meaſure neglected and overlooked, whilſt they paid that worſhip to vain idols which was due to him alone. Mr. Locke therefore had juſt reaſon to ſay, that "in the crowds "of wrong notions and invented rites, the world had almoſt loſt "ſight of the only true God (*a*)." Lord Bolingbroke makes the

(*a*) Locke's Reaſon. of Chriſt. in his works, vol. II. p. 530, 531. Edit. 3d.

ſame

ſame obſervation, that " they loſt ſight of him, and ſuffered ima-" ginary beings to intercept the worſhip due to him alone (*b*)." Allowing the moſt favourable repreſentations that can poſſibly be made of the ſtate of the heathen world, conſiſtently with truth and fact, the darkneſs and confuſion the people were under with regard to the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was groſs and deplorable to an aſtoniſhing degree; ſo that they ſtood in great need of an extraordinary divine interpoſition to recover them from it. This is what I ſhall now proceed to ſhew. And it will be proper to take ſome notice of the principal ſteps by which this grand defection from the right knowledge and worſhip of the only true God was brought about, and came to prevail ſo generally among the nations. And in carrying on this enquiry I ſhall have a particular regard to thoſe Pagan nations which have been moſt admired for their wiſdom, and among whom learning and philoſophy ſeemed to make the greateſt progreſs.

(*b*) Bol. Works, vol. IV. p. 80, et 461. Edit. 4to.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The firſt corruption of religion, and deviation from the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, was the worſhip of heaven and the heavenly bodies. This the moſt antient kind of idolatry. It began very early, and ſpread very generally among the heathen nations.

THE moſt antient idolatry, and which was probably the firſt deviation from the worſhip of the one true God, ſeems to have been the worſhip of heaven and the heavenly bodies, the ſun, moon, and ſtars. Diodorus Siculus acquaints us, " That the moſt antient people of Egypt, looking up to the " world above them, and the Nature of the univerſe, and being " ſtruck with aſtoniſhment and admiration, ſuppoſed the ſun " and moon to be the eternal and firſt or principal Gods." And he afterwards adds, that " they ſuppoſed that theſe gods govern the whole world (*c*)." This paſſage is cited by Euſebius, who alſo obſerves concerning the antient Phœnicians, that οἱ πρωτοὶ φυσικοὶ, the firſt natural philoſophers among them, or the firſt who profeſſedly applied themſelves to enquire into the nature of things, " looked upon the ſun and moon, and other wandering " ſtars, and the elements, and the things that were connected

(*c*) Τῆς κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἀνθρώπους τὸ παλαιὸν γενομένους ἀναβλέψαντας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὅλων φύσιν, καταπλαγέντας τε καὶ θαυμάσαντας ὑπολαβεῖν εἶναι θεοὺς αἰδίους τε καὶ πρώτους τόν τε ἥλιον καὶ τὴν σελήνην τούτους δὲ τοὺς θεοὺς ὑφίστασθαι τὸν σύμπαντα κόσμον διοικεῖν. Diod. Sicul. lib. I. Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. I. cap. 9. ab initio.

" with theſe, to be the only gods." Thus, inſtead of being led by contemplating the wonderful works of God, to adore him the glorious author, theſe ſearchers into nature worſhipped the works themſelves as Gods. Truſting to their own wiſdom, they began to neglect the antient tradition, which Moſes lays down as the foundation of all religion, that *in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* What has been ſaid of the Egyptians and Phœnicians holds equally concerning the Aſſyrians and Chaldeans, whom many ſuppoſe to have been the firſt that rendered divine worſhip to the heavenly bodies. It is not however probable, that any of theſe nations fell all at once into the groſſeſt kind of this idolatry. They began very early to apply themſelves to the ſtudy of aſtronomy, and to make obſervations on the ſtars, their motions and influences. Among them judicial aſtrology had its riſe. By indulging their ſpeculations they came to regard them as living intelligent beings, a notion which afterwards obtained very generally among mankind (*d*). At firſt probably they might conſider them

(*d*) The learned Dr. Campbell is very poſitive, that " beyond all doubt, man, " if left to himſelf, without inſtruction, will conceive the heavenly bodies to be " all animated; and that by inward life and power they perform all their mo- " tions*." And again, he ſays, " I cannot help being aſſured, that mankind, left " wholly to themſelves, having no ſupernatural revelation, will not only appre- " hend the heavenly bodies are animals, but will confine their thoughts, their " hopes and fears, to theſe ſuperior beings, upon whom they judge by experience " they depend; and will have no notion, no conception of an inviſible Being, in- " finitely greater, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever†." He expreſſes himſelf to the ſame purpoſe in other places, and thinks this is the moſt natural way of accounting for the original of idolatry. It appears to me very probable, that men began very early to look upon the ſun, moon, and ſtars to be animated beings; and that this, with the conſideration of their influences on this lower world, was what

* Campbell's Neceſſity of Revelation, p. 185, 186. † Ibid. p. 211, and p. 393.

them in a ſubordination to the Supreme, as the moſt glorious miniſters of the Moſt High, and to whom the adminiſtration of things was chiefly committed; to whom therefore they paid a ſubordinate worſhip. But they came afterwards to regard them as the principal deities, who had an univerſal dominion, and on whom mankind had their chief dependence. Thus was introduced a plurality of deities; and the knowledge and worſhip of the only true God came to be in a great meaſure neglected and loſt. Or, if they paid a greater worſhip to one God as ſuperior to the reſt, it was the ſun. This kind of idolatry ſoon ſpread among the nations. Maimonides tells us concerning the antient

what principally gave riſe to the firſt and moſt antient idolatry. But I cannot carry it ſo far as to pronounce with this learned writer, that men, if left to themſelves, would, "beyond all doubt," conceive the heavenly bodies to be all animated, and to perform all their motions by an inward life and power; and that it would be as natural for them to look upon the ſtars to be living beings, as to believe that the animals they ſee about them, men, birds, beaſts, &c. are living beings. I ſhould think that their conſtant unvaried motions, ſo different from the ſpontaneous motions of animals, would rather lead men to conclude, that they did not move by an inward life and power of their own. Or, ſuppoſing men to regard them as living beings, it would not neceſſarily follow, that they could not raiſe their views beyond them to an inviſible Deity. They might ſtill look upon them to be the creatures and ſubjects of the Supreme; eſpecially conſidering that, as hath been already ſhewn, the notion of the Supreme Being, who created heaven and earth, had been communicated to mankind from the beginning. There have been Chriſtians, who believed the ſtars to be animated. So did the famous Origen, who believed them to be endued by God with reaſon and wiſdom, and yet did not think they ought to be worſhipped, but God only, who made them to be what they are, and gave them light and underſtanding——and that the ſun, moon, and other ſtars, all join with juſt men in praiſing God, and his only begotten Son *. The ſame may be ſaid of that learned Rabbi Maimonides, who aſſerts, that the celeſtial orbs are intelligent and rational animals, which worſhip, praiſe, and celebrate their Creator and Lord. And he repreſents other Jewiſh doctors as of the ſame opinion †.

* Origen cont. Celſ. lib. V. p. 237, 238. † Maimon. More Nevoch. part ii. cap. 5.

Zabians, who, he ſays, had filled a great part of the earth, that they held, that there is no God beſide the ſtars: that they are all deities; but that the ſun is the great or chief god: and that the higheſt notion they formed of God was, that he is the ſpirit or ſoul of the celeſtial orbs (*e*). In like manner Philo Biblius, the tranſlator of Sanchoniathon's Phœnician Hiſtory, tells us concerning the antient inhabitants of Phœnicia, that "they accounted this "god, ſpeaking of the ſun, to be the only Lord of heaven— "Τύτον γὰρ θεὸν ἐνομιζόν μόνον οὐρανῦ κύριον." And therefore he adds, that they called him Baal Samen, which in the Phœnician language has that ſignification (*f*). The learned Mr. Sale, in his preliminary diſcourſe to his tranſlation of the Koran, obſerves from the Arabian writers, that the antient Arabs, from the riſing and ſetting of the ſtars, by long experience, obſerved what changes happen in the air, and at length came to aſcribe divine power to them. And it appears from a paſſage in the antient book of Job, that in his time, which was probably before Moſes, the worſhip of the heavenly bodies was practiſed in thoſe parts of Arabia where he lived: though it is likely there were ſtill many among them, as well as Job himſelf, who regarded it as a great iniquity to be puniſhed by the judge, and as a denying the God that is above. Job xxxi. 26, 27, 28. As to the antient Perſians, though Dr. Hyde will not allow what Herodotus affirms, that they worſhipped the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and the elements, all along from the beginning, yet he acknowledges that they fell very early into the worſhip of the heavenly bodies, even before

(*e*) Maimon. More Nevoch. part iii. cap. 29.

(*f*) Apud Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. I. cap. 10.

the

the days of Abraham; though he affirms, that they were afterwards reclaimed from it, and that they all along ſtill retained the knowledge and worſhip of the one Supreme God. But whether this account may be depended upon or not, certain it is, that the idolatrous worſhip of the heavenly bodies had made a conſiderable progreſs in the world before the days of Moſes, as is evident from his writings. And it is moſt expreſly prohibited in his law.

With reſpect to the antient Græcians, the teſtimony of Plato in his Cratylus has been often quoted. "The firſt inhabitants of "Greece," ſays he, "appear to me, to have eſteemed theſe only "to be Gods, as many of the Barbarians now do, the ſun, and "moon, and the earth, and ſtars, and heaven (*g*)." The ſame thing is ſignified by Ariſtotle, when he ſaith, that "it hath been "delivered down to us by the antients and thoſe of old times, "both that theſe (viz. the ſtars) are gods, and that the Divi-"nity comprehended whole or univerſal nature (*h*)." And he obſerves, that "all the other things were added afterwards, for "the better perſuaſion of the multitude, and for public utility, "to keep up a reverence for the laws: ſuch as, the repreſent-"ing the gods to be of human form, or like to other ani-"mals, and other things of that kind." When the Greeks

(*g*) Φαίνονται μοὶ οἱ πρώτοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν περὶ την Ἑλλάδα τάτες μόνες θεὸς ἡγεῖσθαι, ὥσπερ νῦν πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων, ἥλιον, καὶ σελήνην, καὶ γὴν, καὶ ἄστρα, καὶ ὐρανὸν. Plat. Oper. Ficin. Edit. Lugdun. p. 263. B.

(*h*) Παραδέδοται ὕπο τῶν ἀρχαίων καὶ παλαιῶν, ὅτι θεοὶ τε ἐισιν ὗτοι, καὶ περιέχει τὸ θεῖον τὴν ὁλην φύσιν. Ariſt. Metaph. lib. xiv. cap. 8. Oper. tom. II. p. 1003. Edit. Paris 1629.

grew in learning and politeneſs, they were ſtill equally addicted to the worſhip of the heavenly bodies, as their rude anceſtors had been, with this difference, that, as Ariſtotle intimates in the paſſage now referred to, they added other groſſer idolatries and ſuperſtitions to it. It was for affirming the ſtars to be inanimate bodies, which was looked upon to be a denying their divinity, and for ſaying that the ſun is a body of fire, and the moon an habitable earth, that Anaxagoras was accuſed at Athens for impiety; and, as ſome authors tell us, fined five talents, and baniſhed (*i*). And though Plutarch ſeems to deny this, yet he owns in his life of Pericles, that Pericles took care to ſend Anaxagoras away from Athens, from an apprehenſion that he would be in great danger of being condemned by the Athenians if he ſtaid there. Even the great Socrates himſelf cenſured him, as guilty of preſumption and arrogance (*k*). And Plato, in the beginning of his tenth book of laws, charges that opinion as leading to atheiſm, and a denial of divine providence: and he himſelf frequently preſcribes the worſhip of the ſtars, which ſeem to be the principal divinities he recommends to the people. The other philoſophers, and eſpecially the Stoics, were of the ſame ſentiments. Balbus the ſtoic, in Cicero's ſecond book De Natura Deorum, when he argues for a providence, takes particular pains to prove, that the ſtars are gods, and to be worſhipped as ſuch. Plutarch gives an authentic teſtimony of the general opinion and practice of the Pagans in his time, and plainly expreſſes his own

(*i*) Diog. Laert. in Anaxagora, lib. ii. ſegm. 12, 13, 14.

(*k*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. iv. cap. 7. ſegm. 6, 7. p. 351. Edit. Oxon. 1749.

appro-

approbation of it. In his anſwer to Colotes, the Epicurean, he reckons it among the things which are moſt firmly believed, and which cannot without great abſurdity be denied, " That there is a " providence, and that the ſun and moon are animated; whom," ſays he, " all men worſhip, and to whom they offer up ſacri- " fices and prayers—Ὃις πάντες ἄνθρωποι θύουσι, καὶ προσεύχονται " καὶ σέβονται (*l*)."

To this ſpecies of idolatry may alſo be referred their worſhipping and aſcribing divinity to the whole compaſs of the heaven or circumambient æther, which many of them eſteemed to be the chief god; not indeed conſidered merely as inanimate, but as animated with a ſoul, of which all the heavenly bodies are partakers. Remarkable to this purpoſe is that paſſage of Ennius, preſerved by Cicero. " Aſpice hoc ſublime candens, quem in- " vocant omnes Jovem—Behold this reſplendent height of heaven, " which all men invoke as Jove." To this may be added a paſſage from Euripides, which Cicero tranſlates thus:

" Vides ſublime fuſum, immoderatum æthera,
" Qui terram tenero circumjectu amplectitur.
" Hunc ſummum habeto divûm, hunc perhibeto Jovem.—

" Thou ſeeſt the high unmeaſurable expanſe of æther, which " encompaſſeth the earth in its tender embrace. This regard as " the chief of the gods, celebrate this as Jupiter (*m*)." The famous ſtoic Chryſippus argued, as Cicero informs us, that he

(*l*) Plut. Oper. tom. ii. p. 1123. Edit. Francof. 1620.

(*m*) De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 2 et 25.

whom

whom men call Jupiter is the æther. " Chryſippus diſputavit " æthera eſſe eum quem homines appellant Jovem." That great naturaliſt Pliny ſays, " It is reaſonable to believe, that this world, " and that which by another name is called heaven, which en- " compaſſeth and governeth all things, is God, eternal, im- " menſe, and which was never made, nor ſhall be deſtroyed (*n*). " —Mundum et hoc quod nomine alio cœlum appellare libuit, " cujus circumflexu reguntur omnia, numen eſſe credi par eſt, " eternum, immenſum, neque genitum, neque interiturum." But it is to be obſerved, that when they aſcribed Divinity to the heavens, it is to be underſtood, not excluſively of, but as having a particular regard to the heavenly bodies, and eſpecially the chief of them the ſun. To him they aſcribed the attributes peculiar to the one true God. Thus Ulyſſes in Homer ſaith of the ſun, that " he ſeeth and knoweth all things.—Παντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ παντ' ἐπακ- κύει (*o*). The Orphic verſes, which whether compoſed by Orpheus himſelf or not, give in many inſtances a juſt repreſentation of the antient Pagan theology, deſcribe him by the moſt glorious epithets, as " having an eternal eye that ſees all things—παν- " δερκὲς ἔχων ἀιώνιον ὄμμα;" and as " the eye of righteouſneſs, and the light of life—ὄμμα δικιοσύνης, ζωῆς φῶς." Menander declares, that men ought to worſhip him as πρῶτον θεῶν—the firſt or chief of the gods (*p*). Plotinus and thoſe Pythagoreans who lived a conſiderable time after Chriſtianity had made ſome progreſs in the world, and who were very clear in their acknow-

(*n*) Hiſt. Nat. lib. ii. cap. 1.

(*o*) Odyſſ. μ. verſ. 321.

(*p*) Apud Campbell. Neceſſ. Revel. p. 203. 295.

 ledgments

ledgments of the one Supreme God, and pretended to an extraordinary degree of refinement, yet pleaded for the divinity and worſhip of the ſun and ſtars, and for offering up prayers to them. The emperor Julian has a pompous oration in honour of the ſun, whom he repreſents as the parent of mankind, who generates our bodies, and ſends down our ſouls, and beſtows upon us all the good things we enjoy—and concludes with ſupplicating to him for peace and ſafety here, and for joy and happineſs hereafter (*q*). Macrobius, who flouriſhed under the emperors Honorius and Theodoſius, and who was himſelf a Pagan (*r*), takes a great deal of pains to prove that the ſun was the one univerſal deity, who was adored under ſeveral names and characters. This plea he manages with a variety of learning in the perſon of Vettius Prætextatus, one of great eminency among the Pagans of that time, whom he repreſents as the preſident of all the ſacred rites, and intimately acquainted with their theology; "ſacrorum omni-"um præſul—ſacrorum unicè conſcius." See the firſt book of his Saturnalia the 17th and following chapters. And he concludes with obſerving, that the prieſts and divines were wont to uſe this prayer in their devotions or holy ceremonies: "O almighty or "all-governing ſun, the ſpirit of the world, the power of the "world, the light of the world — Ἥλιε παντόκρατορ, κοσμου "πνεῦμα, κοσμου δύναμις, κοσμου φῶς." And he adds a quotation from ſome verſes aſcribed to Orpheus, in which the ſun is called

(*q*) Orat. 4.

(*r*) See this clearly proved by Mr. Maſſon, in his Tract on the ſlaughter of the children of Bethlehem.

Jupiter

Jupiter and Bacchus, the father of ſea and land; and the generation of all things is attributed to him (*s*).

The ſame Macrobius acquaints us, that the Aſſyrians gave the name Adad to him whom they worſhipped as the higheſt and greateſt God: that this name being interpreted ſignifies One, and that by him they underſtood the ſun. "Aſſyrii Deo, quem "ſummum maximumque venerantur, Adad nomen dederunt: "ejus nominis interpretatio ſignificat Unus. Hunc igitur ut po-"tentiſſimum adorant Deum: ſed ſubjungunt eidem Deum no-"mina Adargatin, omnemque poteſtatem cunctarum rerum his "duobus attribuunt, ſolem terramque intelligentes (*t*)." It appears from Philoſtratus, that the Indian Brachmans, who were extolled by Appollonius as far excelling all the wiſe men upon earth, made the ſun the chief object of their worſhip, and were themſelves called the prieſts of the ſun. As to the Chineſe, it is ſaid to have been the cuſtom from the time of their firſt emperor Fohi, for their emperors to ſacrifice to heaven and earth. And F. Navarette, who lived many years in China, and was well acquainted with their language, religion, and learning, looks upon it as a certain thing, that the Chineſe have from a remote antiquity worſhipped the ſun, moon, and ſtars; and that they knew nothing more noble than the material heaven which we behold. He adds, that "ſo ſay their books, and their learned

(*s*) Macrob. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 23. p. 217. Edit. Lond. 1694.

(*t*) Ibid.

"men

" men own it (*u*)." Tavernier in his account of Tonquin, which was formerly under the dominion of China, though for ſome hundreds of years paſt it has had kings of its own, relates, that they ſacrifice to the ſun, moon, and other planets; and have four principal gods, and one goddeſs. We are told, that the greater part of the inhabitants of the vaſt Eaſtern Tartary worſhip a plurality of deities; and particularly the ſun, moon, and the four elements (*x*). Herodotus affirms concerning all the Libyans, that they ſacrified only to the ſun and moon: and both he and Strabo ſay of the Maſſagetæ, that they eſteemed the ſun to be the only deity, and ſacrified a horſe to him (*y*). The ſun was alſo the principal deity of the Mexicans and Peruvians in America, to whom they erected temples, and offered ſacrifices, and paid their moſt ſolemn acts of worſhip: and if ſome of them had a notion of a God higher than the ſun, they looked upon him to be too far above them, and therefore had little regard to him in their devotions. I might inſtance alſo in the antient inhabitants of Terra Firma in America, of New Granada, and Hiſpaniola, the Canary and Philippine Iſlands, the Gallans, a people bordering on Abyſſinia, and ſeveral other African nations; as alſo the antient Gauls, Germans, and other nations in Europe (*z*).

(*u*) See Navarette's Account of China in Churchill's Collection of Travels, &c. vol. i. p. 74. 84, 85. et ibid. p. 188, 189.

(*x*) Grimſton's States and Empires, p. 701.

(*y*) Herod. lib. iv. cap. 188. Strabo Geogr. lib. xi.

(*z*) The reader may conſult, concerning ſeveral of the nations here mentioned, Millar's Hiſt. of the Propag. of Chriſtianity, vol. ii.

Thus it appears, that this kind of idolatry, which the ſcripture calls the worſhip of the hoſt of heaven, hath ſpread generally through the Pagan nations in Europe, Aſia, Africa, and America, not only among the ſavage and illiterate, but the moſt learned and polite. Human wiſdom and philoſophy, inſtead of reclaiming them from it, rather deviſed plauſible colours and pretences to palliate or juſtify it. And it is owing principally to the light of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelation, that this idolatry is now baniſhed from ſo many nations among whom it antiently prevailed. Lord Herbert, who endeavours to repreſent the Pagan religion in the moſt favourable light, after having, in the fourth and following chapters of his book De Religione Gentilium, given an account of the worſhip paid by the Pagans, antient and modern, to the heavens, the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and which he repreſents to be univerſal, apologizes for it at the end of his ninth chapter, by ſaying, that they worſhipped the ſtars to the honour of the Supreme God. "Omnes ſtellas, ſed in ſummi Dei ho-"norem, certè olim fuiſſe, et etiamnum eſſe cultas, conclu-"dimus." This indeed was pretended by ſome of the philoſophers, and particularly by thoſe of them who ſtood up as advocates for Paganiſm after Chriſtianity had made its appearance in the world; as if it could tend to the honour of the only true God to render that religious worſhip and adoration to the works which he hath made, which is due to him the glorious Author. That noble writer himſelf, in his 3d chapter, after mentioning the names of the deity which were in uſe among the Hebrews, and ſhewn that thoſe names and titles were alſo uſed among the Gentiles, owns that the Hebrews appropriated thoſe names and titles

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to the one Supreme God ſuperior to the ſun, but that the Gentiles underſtood by him no other than the ſun itſelf. " Quamvis ſu-
" perius ſole numen ſub hiſce nominibus intellexerunt Hebræi
" ſolem neque aliud numen intellexerunt Gentiles." He inſinuates indeed that the worſhip paid to the ſun was ſymbolical, rendered to the ſun as the moſt glorious image and ſymbol of the Divinity. And I do not deny, but that this might be the notion which ſome perſons of ſublime ſpeculation entertained of it. But it does not appear, that the vulgar Pagans, who worſhipped the ſun and ſtars, carried their refinements ſo far. His Lordſhip himſelf expreſſes a doubt, that the people did not ſufficiently underſtand that ſymbolical worſhip. " Symbolicum illum cultum
" haud ſatis forſan intellexit (*a*)." And I think from the accounts that are given us it may be reaſonably concluded, that the generality of the vulgar Heathens, and many even of their learned men and philoſophers themſelves, though they had not entirely loſt the idea of the one Supreme God, transferred it to the ſun. To him they attributed the divine titles and attributes: on him they terminated their worſhip, and in conjunction with him, though in a kind of ſubordination to him, on the other ſtars, and and on the earth and elements; all which they ſuppoſed to be animated. The laſt-mentioned learned and noble author ſuppoſes them to have worſhipped the ſun " vice ſummi Dei;" and repreſents them as having acted no leſs abſurdly than thoſe would do, who, coming to the court of a moſt powerful monarch, ſhould give the honours due only to the king to the firſt courtier

(*a*) Herb. De Relig. Gentil. p. 293. Edit. Amſtel. 8vo. 1700.

they ſaw cloathed in ſplendid apparel. " Certè qui ſolem vice
" ſummi Dei coluerunt, proinde fecere, ac illi qui ad aulam po-
" tentiſſimi principis accedentes, quem primum amictu ſplendido
" indutum cernerent, regium illi cultum deferendum exiſtima-
" verint (*b*)."

Thus we have conſidered the firſt great deviation from the knowledge and worſhip of the true God among the heathen nations. And I ſhall conclude the account of this kind of idolatry with the elegant repreſentation made of it by the author of the book of wiſdom. " Surely vain are all men by nature, who
" are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that
" are ſeen know him that is: neither by conſidering the works
" did they acknowledge the workmaſter; but deemed either fire
" or wind, or the ſwift air, or the circle of the ſtars, or the vio-
" lent water, or the lights of heaven, to be the gods which go-
" vern the world. With whoſe beauty, if they being delighted
" took them to be gods, let them know how much better the
" Lord of them is: for the firſt author of beauty hath created
" them. But if they were aſtoniſhed at their power and virtue,
" let them underſtand by them, how much mightier he is that
" made them. For by the greatneſs and beauty of the creation,
" proportionably the Maker of them is ſeen (*c*)."

(*b*) Herb. De Relig. Gentil. p. 293. Edit. Amſtel. 1700.

(*c*) Wiſd. chap. xiii. 1—5.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Worſhip of deified Men and Heroes another ſpecies of Idolatry of an ancient date, and which obtained very early in the Pagan world. Moſt of the principal objects of the Heathen worſhip, the Dii majorum Gentium, had been once dead men. The names and peculiar attributes originally belonging to the one Supreme God applied to them, particularly to Jupiter; to whom at the ſame time were aſcribed the moſt criminal actions. Jupiter Capitolinus, the principal object of worſhip among the antient Romans, not the one true God, but the chief of the Pagan divinities. The pretence, that the Pagan polytheiſm was only the worſhipping one true God under various names and manifeſtations, examined and ſhewn to be inſufficient. The different names and titles of God erected into different deities.

THERE was another ſpecies of idolatry, which alſo began very early in the world, and very generally prevailed, which was the worſhip of deified men or heroes. Here a new ſcene of polytheiſm opens, which produced an amazing multiplicity of Gods, and continually increaſed. Philo Biblius, as cited by Euſebius, obſerves, that "the moſt antient Barbarians, eſpecially the Phœnicians and Egyptians, from whom "other people took this cuſtom, reckoned thoſe among the "greateſt gods, who had been the inventors of things uſeful and "neceſſary to human life, and who had been benefactors to

" the nations." And that to them they conſecrated pillars and ſtatues, and dedicated ſacred feſtivals (*d*). It is probable, that at firſt theſe things were little more than monuments or memorials to their honour, but afterwards became religious rites; and from honouring and celebrating their memory, they proceeded to regard them as deities. Thus, as the author of the book of Wiſdom expreſſes it, " in proceſs of time an ungodly cuſtom " grown ſtrong was kept as a law, and graven images were " worſhipped by the commandments of kings (*e*)." It was the notion of hero deities, which principally introduced the worſhip of images in human form, to which divine honours were paid. And what is there ſaid of kings may be applied to moſt of the antient legiſlators, and the founders and governors of cities and commonwealths. From political views they encouraged the worſhip of ſome who had once been men, and took them into the number of their gods (*f*). This became part of the religion of

(*d*) Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 9. p. 32, 33. Edit. Paris 1628.

(*e*) Wiſd. ch. xiv. 16.

(*f*) Cicero, in the perſon of Balbus the ſtoic, very much approves the cuſtom of paying divine honours to famous men, and regarding them as gods. De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 24. p. 163, 164. Edit. Cantabrig. 1723. And in his 3d book De Nat. Deor. cap. 19. p. 295. Cotta obſerves, that in moſt cities it was uſual, in order to encourage men to hazard their lives for the commonwealth, to take thoſe who had been eminent for their fortitude into the number of their gods: of which he there gives ſeveral inſtances. Accordingly this is what Cicero himſelf preſcribes in his ſecond book of laws, where he requires, that thoſe gods ſhould be worſhipped, whom their merits had called into heaven. De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8. p. 100. And it will appear from a paſſage to be ſoon quoted from him, that even thoſe which were accounted the chief of the Pagan deities were ſuch as had been once men. Such was the effect of modelling religion by the rules of human wiſdom and policy, which, in this as well as other inſtances, has greatly corrupted and depraved it.

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the ſtate, with which the people readily complied, and which at length was carried ſo far, as in a great meaſure to baniſh the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God out of the Nations. As thoſe that ſet up the heaven, the ſun, and ſtars, for gods, did apply to them the names and attributes of the Supreme Deity, ſo when the cuſtom of worſhipping deified men took place, their names and titles, and the rites of their worſhip, came at length to be confounded with thoſe of the celeſtial deities: and both the one and the other had thoſe attributes aſcribed to them, and that worſhip paid them, which properly belong to the one God, the creator of the univerſe. Philo Biblius, in the paſſage above referred to from Euſebius, obſerves it as a thing particularly remarkable, that they applied the names of their kings to the elements of the univerſe, and to ſeveral of thoſe things which they eſteemed to be gods, and which he calls φυσικὰς θεὰς, *natural gods*, viz. the ſun, moon, and ſtars. This cauſed an inextricable confuſion in the heathen worſhip, as Selden has obſerved (*g*). Thus, Oſiris among the Egyptians, Bel among the Chaldeans, and the Baal of the Phœnicians, ſignified both a deified man and the ſun. Many other names of their gods might be mentioned, which were the names both of ſtars and heroes: and they were both honoured with the moſt divine titles and epithets. Several eminent writers have ſhewn, that the names of ſome of the Pagan deities were corruptions of the Hebrew names of God, as Jove,

(*g*) Seld. De Diis Syris, Proleg. cap. iii. p. 51. Edit. Lipſ. To the ſame purpoſe Lord Herbert. "Initio heroas in aſtris plerumque, aſtra in heroibus co-"lentes, adeò ut cognomines ita eſſent, neque ſatis judicari poſſet num aniles de "iis contextæ fabulæ ad aſtra myſticé, an ad homines mythicé pertinerent." De Relig. Gentil. cap. xi.

Evius,

Euius, Sabius, &c. which were originally underſtood of the one Supreme Deity, but afterwards came to be applied to deified heroes. Who thoſe heroes were that were firſt worſhipped among the Pagans as gods, the learned are not agreed. Some celebrated authors have diſplayed an abundance of learning to ſhew, that all the tables relating to the antient Pagan divinities, and the actions aſcribed to them, were taken from the Scripture accounts of Noah, the Patriarchs, of Moſes, and the moſt eminent Jewiſh heroes. This ſeems to be a carrying the matter too far: yet, I think, they have offered enough to render it probable, that this was the caſe in ſeveral inſtances, and that there was in the heathen mythology a mixture of obſcure traditions relating to ſome of the Patriarchs before and after the flood, and other eminent perſons mentioned in Scripture. Theſe were jumbled together with the accounts of the antient Egyptian and Grecian heroes, and afterwards farther diſguiſed and embelliſhed with poetical fictions, ſo that it is ſcarce poſſible clearly to diſcern and diſtinguiſh the genuine original traditions, from what was afterwards added to them. The Abbé Banier, in his mythology of the antients, has offered a great deal to prove, that the fables of antiquity are not merely allegorical, but founded upon facts, and under the diſguiſe of divers fictitious circumſtances contain the hiſtory of many real events. He gives a particular detail of the hiſtory of the antient deities of the Egyptians, Æthiopians, Phœnicians, Syrians, Chaldeans, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Gauls, Germans, and other nations (*b*). Sir Iſaac Newton, in his Chronology,

(*b*) The Abbé Pluche, in his Hiſtoire du Ciel, goes upon a different ſcheme. He endeavours to ſhew, that the Egyptian mythology, religion, and theogony, from which that of the Greeks and Romans was derived, was wholly owing to an abuſe of

Chronology, has alſo conſidered this matter, and given a good account of the antient deities, ſo famous in Pagan ſtory, eſpecially among the Egyptians and Greeks. It may not be improper here to mention a judicious obſervation of Pauſanias, that "in "every age, many events which happened a long time ago, have "been rendered incredible by thoſe who have raiſed a ſuper-"ſtructure of lies upon things which were originally true." He adds, that "they who heard theſe fabulous relations with plea-"ſure, were apt to add to them other fictions, and ſo the truths by "mixing falſhoods with them were corrupted and deſtroyed (*i*)." As the Pagans had among them traditionary accounts of the lives and actions, both good and bad, of thoſe perſons who had been deified, theſe being mixed with fables, were wrought into their theology; which had the moſt pernicious effect upon their religion and worſhip. Cotta, in Cicero De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 42. ſpeaking of thoſe who ſaid that famous and powerful men had after death obtained divine honours, and been admitted into the number of the gods; and that theſe are the gods whom we are

of the antient hieroglyphical characters, which were originally nothing elſe than ſigns to advertiſe the Egyptians of the increaſe and decreaſe of the Nile, of the variations of the ſeaſons, the rules of agriculture, and the different labours of the huſbandman, and other things of the like nature. That it might be ſo in ſeveral inſtances, and that an abuſe of the hieroglyphical characters probably gave occaſion to ſome of the antient mythological fables, may be allowed, and had been obſerved by learned men before. But to make this the ſole original of the gods and goddeſſes of the Egyptians and Greeks, with all their ſacred rites and ceremonies, is a ſcheme that cannot be ſupported. His conjectures are very ingenious; but in the extent to which he has carried them, ſerve only to ſhew, how apt learned men are, when they have fallen upon a new and favourite hypotheſis, to run into extremes.

(*i*) Ἐν τῷ πάντι ἀιωνι πόλλα μὲν πάλαι συμβάντα μηκέτι δὲ γενόμενα ἄπιστα εἶναι πεποιήκασιν οἱ τοῖς ἀληθέσιν ἐποικοδομῶντες ἐψευσμένα. Pauſanias in Arcadicis.

wont to ſupplicate and adore; adds, that this ſubject was particularly treated of by Euhemerus, the Meſſenian, whoſe work was tranſlated by Ennius into Latin; and that he ſhewed both when they died and where their ſepulchres were to be ſeen. " Ab Euhe-
" mero autem et mortes et ſepulturæ demonſtrantur deorum (*k*)."
He indeed there inſinuates, that thoſe who talked thus were void of all religion; " expertes religionum omnium." And puts the queſtion, whether Euhemerus did not, inſtead of confirming religion, take it away intirely? " Utrum igitur hic confirmaſſe
" religionem videtur, an penitus totam ſuſtuliſſe?" Yet the ſame Cotta, in the 3d book De Nat. Deor. cap. xv. et ſeq. inſiſts largely upon it, that ſome of their gods were once mortals; and repreſents thoſe accounts as collected from antient fame or traditions of the Greeks. " Ex veteri Græciæ fama collectas." Ibid. cap. xxiii. And Cicero, in one of his beſt treatiſes, expreſſes himſelf very fully to the ſame purpoſe. He ſays, that " almoſt
" the whole heaven is filled with the human race: that upon
" ſearching into the antient accounts, and what the Greek
" writers have delivered from them, it will be found, that even
" thoſe that are accounted the greater deities, dii majorum gen-
" tium, were taken from among men into heaven: that their
" ſepulchres were ſhewn in Greece."——And he intimates, that
" theſe things were delivered in the myſteries themſelves, as thoſe

(*k*) Lactantius gives a particular account of Euhemerus, and acquaints us, that he gave the hiſtory of their births, marriages, offspring, actions, government, and death. Divin. Inſtit. lib. i. cap. ii. p. 62. et De Irâ Dei, cap. 2. p. 62. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

" that

" that were initiated knew (*l*)." The Dii majorum gentium, which were alſo called Conſentes, were comprehended by Ennius in this diſtich,

" Juno, Veſta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars,
" Mercurius, Jovis, Neptunus, Vulcanus, Apollo."

Thus, according to Cicero, thoſe which were eſteemed the ſuperior deities, and were the principal objects of the Pagan worſhip, had been once men: and this was taught even in the myſteries (*m*). By the way I would obſerve, that this is abſolutely ſubverſive of the ſcheme of thoſe who would make the names of theſe gods paſs only for different names and manifeſtations of the one Supreme Divinity: which was the pretence of ſome of the antient philoſophers and apologiſts for Paganiſm, and has been adopted by ſeveral learned moderns. Plutarch indeed, in his treatiſe de Iſid. et Oſir. paſſes a very ſevere cenſure upon Euhemerus for giving ſuch accounts of their gods, as made them

(*l*) " Totum prope cœlum, nonne humano genere completum eſt? Si verò " ſcrutari vetera, et ex his ea quæ Scriptores Græciæ prodiderunt, eruere coner; " ipſi illi, majorum gentium dii qui habentur, hinc a nobis profecti in cœlum re- " perientur. Quare quorum demonſtrantur ſepulchra in Græcia reminiſcere, quo- " niam es initiatus, quæ traduntur in myſteriis; tum denique, quam late hoc " pateat intelliges." Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. i. cap. 12, 13. p. 30. Edit. Davis, 1738.

(*m*) Yet to ſhew how inconſiſtent the Heathens were in their theology, when ſome lands in Bœotia were exempted by law from taxes, becauſe they belonged to the immortal gods, the Roman publicans, or tax-gatherers, were not willing to allow it, under pretence, that none were to be eſteemed immortal gods, who had once been men. So Cotta in Cicero informs us. " Noſtri quidem publicani, cum " eſſent agri in Bœotia deorum immortalium excepti lege cenſoria, negabant immor- " tales eſſe ullos qui aliquando homines fuiſſent." De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 19. p. 294.

to have been originally no more than kings and great men. He charges this as tending to the utter ſubverſion of all religion (*n*). But whatever tendency it might have to expoſe the Pagan religion, it cannot reaſonably be denied, that ſome of thoſe which were accounted their principal deities had been originally of the human race. From this very treatiſe of Plutarch, in which he cenſures Euhemerus, it appears, that ſome of the Egyptian prieſts themſelves, ſpeaking of Oſiris, whom they called the great and good, the lord of all, gave an account of his birth, his actions, and exploits; that he was king of Egypt, and that he drew the Egyptians from a ſavage beaſtly way of living, by teaching them agriculture, and the uſe of grain, giving them laws, and inſtructing them how to honour the gods. They mention the years of his reign, the time and circumſtances of his death, and pretended to ſhew his ſepulchre. And I cannot help thinking, that they who reſolved theſe things into antient hiſtorical traditions, though theſe traditions were undoubtedly very much obſcured and mixed with fables, gave a much more reaſonable account of them, than thoſe who endeavoured to reſolve them wholly into phyſical allegories, which by the account Plutarch gives of them were very much forced; and in the explication of which they were by no means agreed. And the hypotheſis which he himſelf hath advanced, attributing thoſe things to good or evil dæmons, which others aſcribed to their heroes, hath nothing to ſupport it but his own imagination (*o*).

(*n*) Plutarch. Oper. tom. ii. p. 360. A. Edit. Francof. 1620.

(*o*) Ibid.

Callimachus,

Callimachus, in his hymn to Jupiter, charges the Cretans as liars, for pretending that they had his ſepulchre among them; whereas he never died, but exiſted always: yet he himſelf affirms Jupiter to have been born in Arcadia. The learned Dr. Cudworth, whom entions this, makes a reflection upon it, which, he ſays, may paſs for a general obſervations, that "the Pagan theo-"logy was all along confounded with a certain mixture of phy-"ſiology and herology," (i. e. the hiſtory of their great men and heroes) "blended together." This obſervation, which that excellent writer frequently repeats, may help us to judge how far that hypotheſis is to be depended upon, which he takes ſo much pains to eſtabliſh, that the Jupiter of the Pagans was the one true Supreme God, and worſhipped as ſuch, not only by the philoſophers but by the people. He roundly aſſerts, that "as for the vulgar of "the Greekiſh Pagans, whether they apprehended God to be a "mind or intellect ſeparate from the world, or elſe to be a ſoul "of the world only (*p*), it cannot be doubted, but by the word "Ζευς

(*p*) I think the Doctor here makes a very imperfect enumeration of the various ſenſes in which Jupiter was taken by the people, and even by the learned Pagans themſelves. Some by Jupiter underſtood the world itſelf; others, the ſoul of the world. And Macrobius affirms Jupiter to be the ſun. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 23. He begins that chapter thus: "Nec ipſe Jupiter rex deorum ſolis naturam videtur ex-"cedere: ſed eundem eſſe Jovem claris docetur indiciis.—Jupiter himſelf, the king "of the gods, does not ſeem to exceed the nature of the ſun: and that Jupiter is "the ſame with the ſun appears from clear evidences." Others ſuppoſed Jupiter to be the æther, as in the paſſages cited above from Euripides and Ennius. To whom may be added, Virgil, who calls the æther Pater Omnipotens. Horace often uſes the word Jupiter to ſignify the air, as in lib. iii. ode 10. verſ. 7, 8. Epod. 13. verſ. 2. but eſpecially lib. i. ode 1. verſ. 25. in the notes upon which, in the Delphin edition, there is a quotation from Varro, that the antient Greeks by Jupiter underſtood the air, the wind, and clouds. But he ſeems generally to have been taken

" Ζευς they commonly underſtood the Supreme Deity in one or " other of thoſe ſenſes, the father and king of gods; he being " frequently thus ſtiled in their ſolemn nuncupation of vows— " O Jupiter father, and O Jupiter king.—Ζεῦ πατὴρ, Ζεῦ ἄνα." And that " the Latins did, in like manner, by Jupiter and Jovis, " frequently denote the Supreme Deity and Monarch of the uni- " verſe is a thing unqueſtionable, and which does ſufficiently " appear from thoſe epithets which were given him of Optimus " and Maximus, the Beſt and Greateſt, and alſo of Omnipotent, " frequently beſtowed upon him by Virgil and others (*q*)" And he thinks the very name of Jupiter or Jovis was of an Hebraical extraction, and derived from the tetragrammaton, which was pronounced Jovah or Javoh, or Ιεύω or Ιάω, or the like. And the abbreviation of this was Jah: and from thence came Jovis pater, Jove the father, abbreviated into Jupiter (*r*). I ſhall not conteſt this etymology of the name Jupiter, which many learned men have thought probable. But that this name, which might have been originally deſigned to expreſs the Supreme God, was afterwards generally applied by the Pagans to the principal of their hero deities, cannot be reaſonably denied. It admits of the cleareſt proof, that the Jupiter of the poets, whom they often honoured with the moſt magnificent epithets, as the thunderer, the omnipotent, the father of gods and men, and whom they frequently deſcribe as exerciſing a ſovereign univerſal dominion,

taken by the people for the hero deity, the ſon of Saturn, celebrated by the poets.

(*q*) Intel. ſyſt. chap. iv. ſect. xiv. p. 259, 260. 2d. Edit.

(*r*) Ibid. et p. 451.

is

is the ſame Jupiter of whom they make ſuch indecent repreſentations, and of whom the mythologiſts told ſuch monſtrous fables, many of which were adopted into their religion. Their aſcribing to him ſuch divine titles, and the government of all things, ſhews, that they had among them a notion of one Supreme Divinity, and of the attributes which properly belonged to him; but it alſo ſhews, that they confounded the one Supreme God with the chief of their idol-deities, and aſcribed to the latter the peculiar characters and worſhip due to the former.

Many paſſages of this kind might be produced from Homer, who was in great eſteem among the Pagans, both as a poet and a divine. I ſhall only mention a few out of the firſt book of his Iliad. He calls him the high thundering Jove, and repreſents him in the deſcription which is ſo much admired by Longinus and others for its ſublimity, as cauſing all heaven to tremble with his nod: "that he is the moſt excellent of all—πολυ φέρτατος "ἔϛιν." And he elſewhere deſcribes him, "as the father of "gods and men—πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε; who reigneth over "both gods and men—ὃς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρωποισιν ἀνάσσει (*s*)." Yet he mentions his being in danger from a combination of the other gods, Juno, Neptune, and Pallas, who had conſpired to bind him with fetters; and that Thetis delivered him, and averted the danger, by calling in Briareus to his aſſiſtance. He alſo repreſents him as quarreling with Juno, as reproached by her, and threatning her (*t*). Heſiod, in his Theogonia, deſcribes

(*s*) Iliad α. verſ. 354. 281. 528, 529, 530. 581.

(*t*) Ibid. verſ. 397, et ſeq. 540, et ſeq.

Jupiter

Jupiter by the moſt magnificent epithets, as the father of gods and men, the beginning and end of the muſes ſongs, the moſt excellent of the gods, the wiſe, or counſellor, and the greateſt in might, by whoſe thunder the earth is ſhaken, who governs mortals and immortals; and he calls him the moſt glorious Jupiter, the greateſt of all the eternal Gods (*u*). Yet, he ſays, he was born of Rhea and Saturn, along with Veſta, Ceres, Juno, Pluto, Neptune, and was the youngeſt of their ſons: that he dethroned his father Saturn, and expelled him from his empire, verſ. 453, et ſeq. et 490. The Latin poets talk in the ſame ſtrain. Dr. Cudworth has produced ſome remarkable paſſages from Plautus, to ſhew that the Heathens acknowledged one Supreme God, whom they called Jupiter, and entertained noble notions concerning him and his government of the world. Yet the ſame Plautus in his Amphytrio repreſents this very Jupiter as contriving and perpetrating the moſt criminal adultery: and whilſt he aſcribes to him a conduct ſo falſe and vicious, as ſcarce any but the worſt of men could be guilty of, calls him that Jupiter whom all men ought to fear and reverence, "the king or ruler of the "gods—Deûm regnator: who eaſily doeth whatſoever he wills—"facilè quod vult facit." And he honours him with the title of "Jupiter the Supreme Lord of gods and men—ſummus imperator divûm atque hominum Jupiter (*x*). Ovid calls Jupiter "Pater Omnipotens—the Father Almighty," even when he is

(*u*) Theogon. verſ. 47, 48, 49, 457, 458. 481. 506. 548.

(*x*) Amphytr. Prolog. lin. 23. 45. 139. Act v. ſcen. i. lin. 64.

going to tell of his deflouring Calliſto (*y*). And when he repreſents him as taking upon him the ſhape of a bull that he might carry off and commit a rape upon Europa, he gives that magnificent deſcription of him, which the Doctor alſo produces to ſhew that by Jupiter the Supreme God was ſignified.

" Ille pater, rectorque Deûm, cui dextra triſulcis
" Ignibus armata eſt, qui nutu concutit orbem,
" Induitur tauri faciem (*z*)."

Where he calls him the father and ruler of the gods, whoſe right hand is armed with three-forked thunderbolts, who ſhakes the world with his nod.

Virgil was a poet of great learning and judgment, and he has ſeveral paſſages which have been produced to prove, that the Pagans underſtood by Jupiter the one true Supreme God. He frequently calls him " the Father Almighty—Pater Omnipotens, " The Father of gods and king of men—Divûm pater atque ho- " minum rex (*a*)." He introduces Venus as addreſſing him in that noble manner;

" O qui res hominumque Deûmque
" Æternis regis imperiis, et fulmine terres (*b*)."

(*y*) Metamorph. lib. ii. verſ. 402.

(*z*) Ibid. verſ. 850, 851.

(*a*) Æneid. lib. i. verſ. 65. et lib. x. verſ. 2.

(*b*) Ibid. lib. i. verſ. 229, 230.

Of the ſame kind is that other addreſs of Venus to him:

" O Pater, O hominum Divûmque æterna poteſtas (*c*)."

But let us conſider who that Jupiter is, of whom the poet ſays theſe great things. It is the ſame Jupiter whom he deſcribes as the father of Venus, and huſband of Juno, and whom he repreſents as at a difficulty how to act, that he might not diſoblige his wife or his daughter, who took oppoſite ſides. Juno is introduced as boaſting of herſelf, that ſhe was the queen of the gods, and the ſiſter and wife of Jupiter.

" Divûm incedo regina Joviſque
" Et ſoror et conjunx (*d*)."

And Jupiter himſelf in a ſoothing ſpeech he makes to her, calls her his ſiſter and beloved wife (*e*). The ſame Jupiter is honoured by the poet with the character of Jupiter omnipotens, when he ſpeaks of the prayer offered to him by Jarbas, king of the Gætulians, who was begotten by him of a Garamantian nymph. Æneid. iv. verſ. 198. 206. 208.

The laſt poet I ſhall mention is Horace. There is an admirable paſſage in the 12th ode of his firſt book, which has been often quoted:

(*c*) Æneid. lib. x. verſ. 18.

(*d*) Ibid. lib. i. verſ. 46, 47.

(*e*) Ibid. lib. x. verſ. 607.

" Quid

" Quid prius dicam ſolitis parentis
" Laudibus, qui res hominum ac Deorum,
" Qui mare et terras, variiſque mundum
" Temperat horis?
Unde nil majus generatur ipſo;
Nec viget quidquam ſimile aut ſecundum.

Scarce any thing more ſublime could be ſaid of the one true Supreme God. He repreſents him as exerciſing an univerſal dominion, governing the affairs of gods and men, the ſea, the land, and the ſeaſons; than whom nothing is greater; nor is there any thing like him, or that can be reckoned ſo much as ſecond to him. Yet in this very ode he addreſſes him as having ſprung from Saturn; which ſhews that Jupiter, the ſon of Saturn, was that Jupiter of whom he had ſaid ſuch glorious things.

Gentis humanæ pater atque cuſtos
Orte Saturno.

And he celebrates along with him, though in an inferior degree, Pallas, Liber, Phœbus.

Another paſſage of the ſame kind is in the fourth ode of his third book, where he ſaith of Jupiter,

Qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat
Ventoſum, et urbes, regnaque triſtia,
Divoſque mortaleſque turmas
Imperio regit unus æquo.

Yet in the verſes immediately ſucceeding this magnificent deſcription, he repreſents the Jupiter he is ſpeaking of, as having been in danger and ſtruck with great terror by the inſurrection of the Titans; " magnum terrorem intulerat Jovi:" But that he was aſſiſted by Pallas, Vulcan, Juno, and Apollo. See alſo lib. ii. ode 12. verſ. 7, 8, 9. The ſame poet calls Jupiter the ſupreme or higheſt god, when he ſpeaks of his amours with Latona, by whom he had Apollo and Diana—" Latonamque ſupremo dilec-" tam penitus Jovi." Lib. i. ode 21. And he elſewhere hints at Jupiter's debauching Danae, and raviſhing Ganymede. Lib. iii. ode 16. and lib. iv. ode 4.

I have inſiſted the more largely upon this matter, becauſe great ſtreſs has been laid upon ſeveral of the paſſages which have been mentioned, to prove, that by the Pagan Jupiter the one true Supreme God was underſtood, the ſame whom we adore: whereas the proper concluſion to be drawn from it, is not that the Jupiter celebrated by the poets was the one true God, but that they aſcribed to their Jupiter, who was really an idol, the peculiar attributes and ſupreme dominion which belong only to the true God. And it muſt be obſerved, that the Jupiter of the poets was the popular Jupiter, the object of vulgar adoration among the Pagans. There is a paſſage of Dio Chryſoſtomus, orat. 36. cited by Dr. Cudworth, which is very full to this purpoſe. He ſays, " All the " poets call the firſt and greateſt God the father, and alſo the " king univerſally of the whole rational kind: believing or be-" ing perſuaded by whom, i. e. by the poets, men erect altars to " Jupiter the king, and ſtick not to call him father in their devotions.—

" tions.—Ὁις πειθόμενοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι Διος βασιλέως ἱδρύονται βομούς, " καὶ δὴ καὶ πατέρα αὐτὸν ἐκ ἐκείνων προσαγορέυειν ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς (*f*)." Where it is plainly intimated, that it was by the poets that the people were inſtructed to erect altars, and to make their prayers and vows to Jupiter as the Father and King of all. And Dr. Cudworth himſelf more than once obſerves, That the poets were the prophets and chief inſtructors of the people. This learned writer alſo acknowledges, that " among the Greeks Ζευς was ſup- " poſed to have been at firſt the name of a man or a hero, but yet " was afterwards applied to ſignify the Supreme God." And he makes the ſame obſervation concerning the Egyptian Jupiter Hammon: which name he thinks to have been firſt derived from Ham or Cham, the ſon of Noah; though he endeavours to prove that it was uſed among the Egyptians to expreſs the Supreme Deity. But this only ſhews the truth of what he there obſerves, " That there might be ſuch a mixture of herology or hiſtory, " together with theology, amongſt the Egyptians, as there was " amongſt the Greeks (*g*)." This muſt needs have produced a ſtrange confuſion in their theology and worſhip, and which continued all along during the times of Paganiſm, confounding the Supreme God with an idol, and an idol with the Supreme. The ſame excellent writer is of opinion, that the Egyptian Jupiter Hammon is mentioned, Jer. xlviii. 25. which he tranſlates thus, " I will puniſh Amon No;" as it is in the margin of our bibles, i. e. as he interprets it, " Amon the god of No." And he pro-

(*f*) Intel. Syſt. chap. iv. ſect. 26. p. 448.

(*g*) Ibid. ſect. 18. p. 338.

duces

duces as parallel to this, the puniſhments denounced in the 46th chapter of Iſaiah, and in the 51ſt of Jeremiah's Prophecies, againſt Bel, which, according to Herodotus, was the name of the Supreme God among the Babylonians (*b*). But theſe paſſages are by no means favourable to the Doctor's hypotheſis, ſince they plainly ſhew, that thoſe prophets, ſpeaking in the name and by the inſpiration of God himſelf, looked upon both Jupiter Hammon the chief god of the Egyptians, and Bel of the Chaldeans, not to have been the one true God, but idol-deities.

The ſame may be ſaid of the Capitoline Jupiter, who was the higheſt object of the adoration of the Roman people, the chief god of their religion, and of their laws. I am ſenſible, that very learned men have been of a different opinion, and particularly the juſtly celebrated author laſt mentioned, who maintains that the Jupiter worſhipped in the Capitol was the one true Supreme God, whom the Romans worſhipped under that name. And it muſt be acknowledged, that the moſt divine titles and attributes were aſcribed to him. He was honoured with the glorious titles of "Optimus et Maximus—the Beſt and Greateſt." Cicero, in one of his orations before the Roman people, Pro Roſcio Amerino, N. 45, ſays of him, "Jupiter Optimus, Maxi-"mus, cujus nutu et arbitrio cœlum, terra, maria reguntur—By "whoſe nod and ſovereign will, the heaven, the earth, and ſeas "are governed." This is a noble deſcription; but it is no more than the poets have frequently ſaid of their Jupiter. So alſo the Cretan Jupiter, whoſe ſepulchre was ſhewn in Crete, is called

(*b*) Intel. Syſt. chap. iv. ſect. 18. p. 339, 340.

by Plutarch, " Ἄρχων καὶ κύριος πάντων—The Ruler and Lord of " all (*i*)." Seneca calls Jupiter, " Cuſtodem rectoremque uni- " verſi, animum ac ſpiritum, mundani hujus operis dominum et " artificem, cui nomen omne convenit—The guardian and ruler " of the univerſe, the ſoul and ſpirit, the artificer and Lord of " this mundane frame, to whom every name agrees." He afterwards ſays of him, he may be rightly called " Mundus—the " World;" and adds, " Ipſe eſt totum quod vides, totus ſuis " partibus inditus, et ſe ſuſtinens vi ſuâ (*k*)." And in other paſſages he ſpeaks of Jupiter as the world, and the ſoul of the world, (which, according to the ſtoics, was an intellectual fire or æther univerſally diffuſed) and as one great whole, of which we all are the parts and members (*l*). When he here ſays, " that to him " every Name agrees," he goes upon the notion adopted by the ſtoics and ſome other philoſophers, that the ſeveral Pagan deities were one God under different names: which pretence ſhall be conſidered preſently. But in all this, it is plain, he repreſents only his own and the ſtoical opinion; not what the popular notion of Jupiter Capitolinus was, about which the enquiry properly lies. And here the ſame obſervation recurs, which was before made with regard to the poets. The divine epithets with which the Roman people honoured the Capitoline Jupiter, ſhew that they ſtill retained among them ſo much of the antient tradition, as to have ſome notion of the Supreme Divinity, and of the attributes

(*i*) Plut. De Iſ. et Oſir. oper. tom. ii. p. 381. D.

(*k*) Nat. Quæſt. lib. ii. cap. 45.

(*l*) See a remarkable paſſage to this purpoſe in his 92d Epiſtle.

which

which belong to him: but it alſo appears, that they ſtrangely perverted and corrupted it, by applying the proper characters and attributes of the one true Supreme God to that Jupiter who was really no more than the chief of their idol deities. For the Jupiter worſhipped by the people in the Capitol was the ſame Jupiter who is celebrated by the poets. This is what Cicero ſignifies in a paſſage quoted by Dr. Cudworth; "Jupiter," ſays he, "is called by the poets the Father of gods and men, and by our "anceſtors the Beſt and Greateſt—Jupiter a poetis dicitur divûm "atque hominum pater, a majoribus autem noſtris Optimus "Maximus (*m*)." And indeed there are ſeveral things which ſhew that the Capitoline was the ſame with the Poetical Jupiter. Horace in the ſublime paſſage quoted above, where he ſpeaks in the moſt exalted terms of the Jupiter whom the Romans worſhipped, repreſents him as ſprung from Saturn—"Orte Saturno." Jupiter Capitoline was particularly deſcribed as the thunderer, and the father of gods and men; ſo alſo was the Jupiter of the poets. The poetic Jupiter had Juno for his wife, and Minerva, for his daughter: ſo alſo Jupiter in the Capitol had Minerva and Juno joined with him. It was to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva that Tarquinius Priſcus dedicated the Capitol, in conſequence of a vow which he had made: and the two latter had chapels in the Capitol, the one on the right of Jupiter, the other on the left, and Jupiter himſelf in the middle. Hence Lactantius obſerves, "that "the Jupiter of the Capitol was not uſually worſhipped without "the partnerſhip of his wife and daughter—Jupiter ſine contu-

(*m*) De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 25.

"bernio

" bernio conjugis filiæque coli non ſolet (*n*)." An inſtance of this we have in Cicero's Oratio pro Domo ſua ad Pontifices. He concludes it with a moſt ſolemn addreſs to Jupiter, whom he there mentions in conjunction with Juno the queen, and Minerva, and the other deities which preſided over their city and commonwealth. Jupiter is placed at the head of them, being looked upon as in a peculiar manner the guardian of the Roman empire: but ſtill he was only one in the number of their divinities, though higher in dignity than the reſt. The Ludi Seculares were the moſt ſolemn of all the Roman ſacred games and feſtivals, to be celebrated once in one hundred and ten years; and which were deſigned both to do honour to the deities who were ſuppoſed to protect the Roman empire, and to implore a bleſſing from them upon the public. And in theſe feſtivals Jupiter was only one of the deities which were celebrated and invoked: with him were joined Juno, Latona, Apollo, and Diana, the Parcæ, Ceres, Pluto, and Proſerpina; as Zoſimus, who was a zealous Pagan, informs us (*o*). And this alſo appears from Horace's famous Carmen Seculare, compoſed for that occaſion (*p*). The truth is, that the Roman

(*n*) Divin. Inſtit. lib. i. cap. 11. p. 63.

(*o*) Zoſim. Hiſt. lib. ii.

(*p*) There was another ſolemn act of devotion, which was ſometimes performed in the moſt antient times of the Roman ſtate, when perſons devoted themſelves to death for the ſafety of the Commonwealth in times of imminent danger; and in this alſo Jupiter was conſidered only as in conjunction with other deities. They devoted themſelves to Janus, Jupiter, Mars, the Dii Manes; praying them to bleſs and proſper the Roman Republic, and to bring deſtruction upon their enemies. The form of this devotion may be ſeen in Caſaubon's notes on Suetonius's Caligula, cap. 14.

Jupiter was one of the Dii majorum gentium, or the Dii conſentes, ranked among them in the verſes before cited from Ennius, as alſo by Varro: and it is obſervable that Cicero, in his ſecond book of laws, when he treats of divine worſhip, takes no particular notice of Jupiter; but crowds him in among the other celeſtial gods, under that general rule. "Divos, et eos qui cœ-"leſtes ſemper habiti, colunto." De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8. p. 100.

The learned Dr. Cudworth, who takes notice of what Lactantius ſays about Juno and Minerva's being joined with the Capitoline Jupiter in the public worſhip, though he is not willing to allow the inference which Lactantius draws from it, that Jupiter Capitolinus was not the one true God, yet obſerves on this occaſion, that "it is plain there is here a certain mixture of the "mythical or poetical theology, together with the natural, as "almoſt every where elſe there was to make up the civil theo-"logy of the Pagans (*q*)." He adds indeed, that "according to "the more recondite and arcane theology of the Pagans, theſe "three Capitoline gods, Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno, as well as

(*q*) Thoſe who were for interpreting this in a way of phyſical allegory, by Jupiter underſtood the æther, by Juno the air, and by Minerva the higher heaven. So Macrobius in Somn. Scip. lib. i. cap. 17. ad Saturnal. lib. iii. cap. 4. Servius in his notes on Æneid. lib. i. verſ. 50. where Juno is called the ſiſter and wife of Jupiter obſerves, that Phyſici, the natural philoſophers, underſtood by Jupiter the æther, and by Juno the air, called his ſiſter and wife, becauſe of the near conjunction between them. Balbus the ſtoic gives the ſame account in Cicero De Nat. Deorum, lib. ii. cap. 66. St. Auſtin acquaints us, that the ſame thing was ſaid by the Pagans in his time. De Civit. Dei, lib. iii. cap. 10. p. 74. And this is not eaſily reconcilable to the notion of Jupiter Capitolinus's being the one Supreme God. That learned Father very well ſhews the confuſion and ſelf-contradiction of Varro and others on this head. Ibid. lib. vii. c. 16. p. 134, and c. 28. p. 141.

"ſome

" ſome others, may be underſtood to have been nothing elſe " but ſeveral names and notions of one Supreme Deity, according " to its ſeveral attributes and manifeſtations (*r*)." Not to examine this hypotheſis at preſent, I would obſerve, that the Doctor calls it " the recondite and arcane theology of the Pagans;" where he plainly intimates, that whatever notions ſome ſpeculative men might entertain of this matter, this theology was not known among the people. Nor was it intended they ſhould know it. They regarded them as diſtinct deities, and adored them as ſuch. The ſame learned writer acknowledges, that " the fabulous " theology, both of the Greeks and Romans, did not only gene- " rate all the other gods, but even Jupiter himſelf alſo their ſupreme " numen, aſſigning him both a father and mother, a grandfather " and grandmother. And though the Romans did not plainly " adopt this into their civil theology, yet are they taxed by St. " Auſtin for ſuffering the ſtatue of Jupiter's nurſe to be kept in " the Capitol for a religious monument (*s*)." The Doctor adds, that " this was connived at by the politicians, in a way of neceſ- " ſary compliance with the vulgar; it being extremely difficult " for them to conceive ſuch a living being or animal as was " never made, and without a beginning (*t*)." He ſeems to me here to give up the cauſe, as far as it relates to the popular Pagan

(*r*) Intel. Syſt. chap. iv. ſect. 27. p. 450.

(*s*) St. Auſtin obſerves properly on this occaſion, that by this they gave teſtimony to Euhemerus, who, with the diligence of an hiſtorian, ſhewed that the gods had been mortal men, Nonne adteſtati ſunt Euhemerò, qui omnes tales deos, non fabuloſâ garrulitate ſed hiſtorica diligentiâ, homines fuiſſe mortaleſque conſcripſit? De Civit. Dei. lib. v. cap. 7. p. 119. A.

(*t*) Intel. Syſt. chap. iv. ſect. 32. p. 478.

notion of Jupiter Capitolinus. The excuſe he makes for the politicians and great men of the ſtate, plainly ſhews how little was to be expected from them for bringing the people to a right ſenſe of religion and the Deity. Moſes, the Lawgiver of the Jews, was governed by quite different and far nobler principles. Having a divine commiſſion, and animated by the ſpirit of God, he was above the mean intereſted views of human policy, and brought an illiterate people to juſt and ſublime notions of the one true eternal Divinity. I ſhall conclude what relates to Jupiter Capitolinus, the chief god of the political Roman ſtate, with an obſervation of the very learned writer I have ſo often mentioned on this occaſion. "The diſtinction of the natural and true theology "from the civil and political, as it was acknowledged by all the "antient Greek philoſophers, but moſt expreſly by Antiſthenes, "Plato, Ariſtotle, and the Stoics, ſo was it owned and much "inſiſted upon both by Scævola, that famous Roman pontifex, "and by Varro, that moſt learned antiquary; they both agreeing, "that the civil theology then eſtabliſhed by the Roman laws was "only the theology of the vulgar, but not the true (*u*)."

I now proceed to obſerve further, that in conſequence of the mixing the hiſtory of their heroes with their theology, the Pagan mythologiſt often aſcribed very ſcandalous actions to their gods; and particularly to Jupiter, whom they regarded as the chief of them. And at the ſame time that they applied to their deities the moſt divine titles and attributes, they repreſented them with all

(*u*) Intel. Syſt. chap. iv. ſect. 32. p. 478.

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the paſſions and even vices of frail mortals. The paſſage in Terence is well known, where a young man encourages himſelf to a lewd action by the example of Jupiter, whom he there deſcribes, as "ſhaking the higheſt heavens with the noiſe of his "thunder—Qui templa cœli ſumma ſonitu concutit (*x*)." Euripides puts this argument into the mouth of ſeveral of his ſpeakers in his tragedies (*y*). Plato obſerves, in his firſt book of laws, that the Cretans, who indulged themſelves in the impure love of boys, pleaded the example of Jupiter and Ganymede (*z*). Many other paſſages might be produced to the ſame purpoſe from antient authors. And theſe things could not but have a very ill effect on the morals of the people, and were laid hold on by wicked and licentious perſons, as giving a ſanction to their vices and debaucheries. It is not therefore without reaſon that Arnobrius exclaims, "Quis eſt mortalium tam ſtudicis moribus inſti-"tutus, quem non ad hujuſmodi furias deorum documenta prori-"tent?—What mortal is ſo chaſtly educated, whom ſuch ex-"amples of the gods might not incite to the moſt libidinous ex-"ceſſes?" Arnob. adverſ. Gent. lib. v. p. 178. edit. var. Lugd. Bat. The ſcandalous things related of the objects of their worſhip had a manifeſt tendency to expoſe religion to contempt. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that they ſometimes ſpoke of their deities in a very diſreſpectful manner, and even of Jupiter

(*x*) Terent. Eunuch. Act iii. ſcene 4.

(*y*) See the paſſages referred to by the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes, vol. i. book ii. ſect. 4. p. 153. Marg. note.

(*z*) Plat. Oper. p. 589. G. Edit. Lugd.

him-

himſelf. Thus Cicero, in his Oratio pro Domo ſua ad Pontifices, ſpeaks by way of gibe againſt Clodius, that he might call himſelf Jupiter, as having his ſiſter for his wife.

Hence it was that the primitive Chriſtians looked upon the name of Jupiter as ſo contaminated and polluted, that they would rather endure the greateſt torments than make uſe of it to ſignify the one true God. There is a remarkable paſſage of Origen to this purpoſe, in his fifth book againſt Celſus, p. 262. Edit. Cantabrig. where, ſpeaking of the Chriſtians, he declares, "that they rather "choſe to undergo any torments, than to acknowledge Jupiter "to be God. For," ſays he, "we do not look upon Jupiter and "Sabaoth" [a Hebrew title, ſigifying the Lord of Hoſts] "to be "the ſame: nor do we look upon Jupiter to be a Divinity at all; "but a certain dæmon, who takes pleaſure in being called by that "name, and who is not friendly to man, nor to the true God. "And if the Egyptians produce their Ammon to us, threatening "us with death, we will rather die than call Ammon God." And he had expreſſed himſelf to the ſame purpoſe before, ibid. lib. i. p. 29, where he ſays, the Chriſtians ſuffer death rather than call God Jupiter: and he mentions it as an inſtance of their piety, that they would not apply any of thoſe names, which were taken from the poetical fables, to the Creator of the univerſe; and that when they ſpoke of God they either indefinitely uſe the word God, or with an addition, the Creator of all things, the Maker of heaven and earth. Lactantius alſo treats it as a great abſurdity to give the name of Jupiter to the one true God (*a*).

(*a*) Divin. Inſtit. lib. i. cap. 4. p. 63. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

The moſt plauſible apology which is made for the Pagan polytheiſm is, that the one true God was worſhipped under different titles and characters: that thoſe which are reckoned diſtinct deities and objects of worſhip were really no more than different names or attributes of the one Supreme Deity according to his various manifeſtations and effects. This was what the ſtoics and ſome of the other philoſophers maintained. There is a remarkable paſſage of Seneca to this purpoſe, De Benefic. lib. iv. cap. 7, 8. the purport of which is to ſhew, that God may be rightly called by any of the names he mentions, viz. Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the Thunderer, Jupiter Stator, Liber Pater, Hercules, Mercury (*b*), Nature, Fate, and Fortune: for they are all the names of the ſame God, uſing his power in various ways. "Omnia ejuſdem Dei nomina ſunt, variè utentis ſua pote-" ſtate. (*c*)." But we are to take this along with us, that, as has been already hinted, Seneca takes God in the ſenſe of the ſtoics, who held that God is the ſoul of the world, or the world itſelf, conſidered as one great animated being, of which all particular beings, and the things of nature, are the parts and members, or the powers and virtues: which ſeveral parts and powers of the univerſe they called by the names of particular popular deities, and gave the name of God to the whole. To this they endea-

(*b*) When Seneca here ſays, "Hunc et Liberum Patrem, et Herculem, ac Mer-" curium noſtri putant;" by noſtri he does not mean the Roman people in general, as if they looked upon Jupiter, Liber Pater, Hercules, and Mercury, to be one and the ſame god; but the Stoics, of which ſect he was, and whom he elſewhere calls Stoici noſtri. Epiſt. 65.

(*c*) There is another paſſage of Seneca parallel to this. Nat. Quæſt. lib. ii. cap. 45.

vour

vour to accommodate the fables of the poetical mythology concerning Jupiter, and the other gods and goddeſſes; though many of their explications were ſo forced and unnatural, that they were often ridiculed by other Pagans on the account of them. Dr. Cudworth alſo produces a paſſage from Apuleius to ſhew, that all the Pagans throughout the world worſhipped one Supreme God under different names, and by various rights. "Numen unicum "multiformi ſpecie, ritu vario, nomine multijugo, totus venera-"tur orbis." But not to inſiſt upon it, that by God Apuleius ſeems there to underſtand univerſal nature, it muſt be obſerved, that he and ſeveral other Pagans who lived after the introduction of Chriſtianity, made it their buſineſs to put a fair gloſs upon the Heathen ſuperſtition and idolatry, and in many inſtances diſguiſed it. If this plea be extended, as ſome of thoſe apologiſts and refiners of Paganiſm pretended, to all the popular Heathen deities in general, as if they were all no other than ſo many different names of the one Supreme God, it would follow that they acknowledged and worſhipped no hero deities at all; than which nothing can be more contrary to truth and fact. Accordingly theſe pretences of the philoſophers made little impreſſion upon the people, who had always been uſed to worſhip them as ſo many diſtinct perſonal divinities, and knew very well, that the public religion regarded them as ſuch. They were acquainted with the antient traditions concerning them, and the actions aſcribed to them by the poets and mythologiſts, to which many of their ſacred rites referred, and on which they were founded. Tertullian puts the caſe very ſtrongly to the Pagans, that they themſelves were ſenſible that their gods had once been men. He appeals to their

own

own conſciences for the truth of this, and to their moſt antient and authentic monuments (*d*). The learned Dr. Cudworth, who ſeems very fond of the hypotheſis of reſolving the Pagan divinities into different names of the one Supreme God, yet finds himſelf obliged to acknowledge, that "Herology," i. e. the hiſtory and worſhip of hero deities, "was inſerted and complicated all along together "with phyſiology, in the paganic fables of their gods (*e*). Indeed theſe things were ſo blended together, that it was ſcarce poſſible to ſeparate them, or to point out diſtinctly what belonged to the one, and what to the other: which produced a monſtrous jumble in their religion and worſhip. And though this excellent writer concludes his account of the Egyptian theology with declaring his opinion, that "a great part of the Egyptian polytheiſm "was nothing elſe but the worſhipping the one Supreme God "under many different names and notions, as of Hammon, Neith, Oſiris, Iſis, Serapis, Kneph, &c. (*f*);" yet it appears from the account he himſelf gives from Plutarch and others, that their moſt learned prieſts were far from being agreed in their notions of what was to be underſtood by Oſiris, Iſis, Serapis, &c. Some held them to be different names of the ſame deity, whom they

(*d*) "Appellamus et provocamus a vobis ad conſcientiam veſtram: illa nos ju-"dicet, illa nos damnet, ſi potuerit negare omnes iſtos Deos veſtros homines "fuiſſe. Si et ipſa inficias ierit, de ſuis antiquitatum monumentis revincetur, ex "quibus eos didicit teſtimonium perhibentibus ad hodiernum, et civitatibus in "quibus nati ſunt, et regionibus in quibus aliquid operati, operum veſtigia reli-"querunt, in quibus etiam ſepulti demonſtrantur." Tertul. Apolog. cap. v. vi. Oper. p. 11. Edit. Paris, 1675.

(*e*) Intel. ſyſt. chap. iv. ſect. xiv. p. 239.

(*f*) Ibid. ſect. 18. p. 352.

ſuppoſed to be the whole animated world, but eſpecially the ſun: others held them to be different deities, or different powers preſiding over the air, moiſture, &c. others gave hiſtorical and traditionary accounts of them as of perſons that had formerly lived and reigned in Egypt. Porphyry makes Serapis to have been an evil demon (*g*). And the Doctor himſelf, who takes notice of this, thinks it cannot be doubted, that it was an evil dæmon that delivered oracles in the temple of Serapis, and affected to be worſhipped as the Supreme God (*h*).

I do not deny that ſome of thoſe, which paſſed for different deities, were probably at firſt only different names of God; but as idolatry increaſed among the nations, thoſe different names came in proceſs of time to be erected into different divinities, and were regarded and worſhipped by the people as ſuch. So that, inſtead of adoring the one Supreme God under his various names and attributes, they turned thoſe very names and attributes into ſo many diſtinct perſonal names of different gods and goddeſſes, whom they worſhipped with different and ſometimes with contrary rites: and thus made them an occaſion of further polytheiſm and idolatry. "The ſeveral names of God," ſaith Dr. Cudworth, "were vulgarly ſpoken of in Greece, as "ſo many diſtinct deities (*i*)." And the ſame may be obſerved concerning the Romans. He elſewhere acknowledgeth, that "the vulgar probably did not underſtand that myſtery of the

(*g*) Ap. Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iv. cap. 23. p. 175.

(*h*) Ubi ſupra, p. 351.

(*i*) Intel. Syſt. p. 260.

"Pagan

" Pagan theology; that many of their gods were nothing but " ſeveral names and notions of one Supreme Deity in its various " manifeſtations and effects (*k*)." Lord Herbert himſelf, who hath uſed his utmoſt efforts to palliate the Pagan polytheiſm, and to ſhew that they worſhipped the one true God, the ſame that we Chriſtians adore, under various names and attributes, yet owns, that what were at firſt only different names, in proceſs of time, as ſuperſtition increaſed, came to be regarded and worſhipped as different gods (*l*). The ſame thing is obſerved by Mr. Selden, who ſays, that in the ſacred hymns the gods were invoked by a variety of names and epithets; becauſe it was imagined, that this variety of names was pleaſing and honourable to them: but that afterwards theſe different names were accounted and worſhipped as different divinities (*m*). Thus idolatry and polytheiſm was making continual advances, even as the nations grew in learning and politeneſs.

(*k*) Intel. Syſt. p. 447.

(*l*) His Lordſhip takes notice of the name of Ζευς σαβαζιος, which was probably derived from the Hebrew *Sabaoth*, and was originally deſigned to ſignify God's ſupreme univerſal dominion, as he is the Lord of Hoſts. He was worſhipped by the Athenians; but it does not appear, that under this name they intended to adore the one Supreme Lord of the univerſe, but regarded him as a particular deity, and thus turned him into an idol. And accordingly Ariſtophanes inveighs againſt him as a ſtrange and foreign divinity, which was lately introduced, and ought to be baniſhed out of Greece. To this Cicero refers, De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 15. p. 132.

(*m*) Seld. De Diis Syris, Proleg. cap. iii. p. 55, 56. Edit, Lipſ.

CHAP. V.

Farther progreſs of the Heathen polytheiſm. The ſymbols and images of the Gods turned into Gods themſelves. The Phyſiology of the Pagans another ſource of idolatry. They made Gods and Goddeſſes of the things of nature, and parts of the univerſe, and of whatſoever was uſeful to mankind. The qualities and affections of the mind, and accidents of life, and even evil qualities and accidents were deified, and had divine honours rendered to them. The moſt refined Pagans agreed, according to Dr. Cudworth, in crumbling the Deity into ſeveral parts, and multiplying it into many Gods. They ſuppoſed God to be in a manner all things, and therefore to be worſhipped in every thing. Divine honours were paid to evil beings acknowledged to be ſuch. The Egyptian idolatry conſidered.

AS the different names, ſo alſo the different ſymbols invented and made uſe of to denote the divinity, came alſo to be worſhipped as gods: ſuch as fire among the Chaldeans, the cow and bull among the Egyptians. And it is not improbable, that the other animal gods worſhipped by the Egyptians, the ſheep, goat, hawk, ibis, ichneumon, crocodile, cat, dog, &c. were at firſt deſigned, according to the wiſdom which then obtained, as ſymbols and hieroglyphical characters of the Supreme Deity, or ſome of his attributes; or, as the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes ſuppoſes, they were marks of their elementary

gods

gods and heroes (*n*). But afterwards they worſhipped and deified the ſymbols themſelves, and thereby fell into the moſt groſs and ſtupid idolatry, which expoſed them to the ridicule of other Pagans.

The ſame may be obſerved concerning the images which were erected to their deities, and were ſuppoſed to have divine powers reſiding in them. Theſe very images became gods, and were worſhipped as ſuch, and had divine honours rendered to them. And this added mightily to the multitude of their gods. Plutarch blames the Græcians for calling the pictures of the gods, and their ſtatues of braſs and ſtone, gods: whereas they ought only to have called them the images of the gods (*o*). How far this was carried among the Athenians, who were accounted the moſt knowing as well as the moſt religious people in the Heathen world, appears from a remarkable ſtory recorded by Laertius (*p*). The philoſopher Stilpo of Magara was brought before the venerable tribunal of the Areopagus at Athens, for ſaying, that the ſtatue of Minerva, which was made by Phidias, was not a god; and though he endeavoured to defend himſelf by alledging that it was not a god but a goddeſs, he was ordered by that court, who were not ſatisfied with this evaſion, to depart the city (*q*).

Their

(*n*) Div. Leg. of Moſes, vol. I. part ii. p. 298. 4th Edit.

(*o*) Plut. De Iſid. et Oſir. oper. tom. ii. p. 379. Edit. Francof.

(*p*) Laert. lib. ii. ſegm. 116.

(*q*) This is not to be underſtood, as if the Heathens looked upon the very images, in themſelves conſidered, to be gods: for who but a fool, ſays Celſus, can imagine thoſe images to be real gods? But they believed that the gods were both repre-

Their phyſiology, as they managed it, was another fruitful ſource of polytheiſm. The firſt phyſiologers, or they who firſt began to philoſophize on the nature of things, being for the moſt part poets, diſguiſed the ſimple original tradition of the creation of the world by allegorical deſcriptions of the nature and origin of things. They turned the things of nature and parts of the univerſe into allegorical perſons, and ſpoke of them as ſo many diſtinct divinities: and at the ſame time they mixed theſe phyſical fables and allegories with the diſguiſed traditionary accounts of their antient heroes. Hence it came to paſs, that, as hath been obſerved by the learned, and particularly by Dr. Cudworth, their coſmogonia, or account of the origin or formation of the world, became alſo a theogonia, or account of the generation of the gods: in which there was a monſtrous confuſion of gods, dæmons, and the things of nature perſonified. Such was the theogonia of Heſiod. And thus was the number of their gods and goddeſſes ſtrangely multiplied. Balbus in Cicero, after having taken notice of the deified heroes, next mentions the phyſiological fables and allegories, from which, he ſays, flowed a great multitude of gods; which, being clothed with human forms, furniſhed fables to the poets, and filled human life with all manner of ſuperſtition. "Alia quoque ex ratione, et quidem phyſicâ, magna "effluxit multitudo deorum, qui induti ſpecie humanâ, fabulas "poetis ſuppeditaverunt, humanam autem vitam ſuperſtitione

repreſented by them, and really preſent in them, and that therefore they ought to be the objects of divine worſhip. See Orig. cont. Celſ. lib. vii. and Arnobius, lib. vi.

"omni

" omni refercerunt (*r*)." And in this many of the philoſophers were no leſs to be blamed than the poets. For they alſo deified the things of nature, and the ſeveral parts of the univerſe, which ſome of them regarded as the ſymbols, others as real parts and members, of the divinity.

Upon the ſame principles, divinity came to be aſcribed to whatever was uſeful in human life. Velleius in Cicero informs us, that Perſæus, who had been an auditor and diſciple of Zeno, ſaid, that both the inventors of things which were of great utility in life were accounted gods, and even the things themſelves which were ſalutary and beneficial were called by the names of the gods (*s*). Cotta ſays the ſame thing of Prodicus Chius, and repreſents him as thereby taking away all religion (*t*). Plutarch alſo paſſes a ſevere cenſure upon thoſe as cauſing abſurd and impious opinions, who give the name of gods to things inſenſible and inanimate, and which the gods have provided for the uſe of mankind; as when they call wine Bacchus, and fire Vulcan; which he thinks is as abſurd, as if men ſhould take the ſails and ropes for the maſter of the ſhip, or the potions and medicines for

(*r*) De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 24. p. 164. Edit. Davis, 2.

(*s*) Ibid. lib. i. cap. 15. p. 40.

(*t*) Ibid. cap. 42. p. 102. This was at length carried ſo far, that there was ſcarce any thing which was of uſe in human life, but had divine honours aſcribed to it, the meaneſt things not excepted, ſuch as the crepitus ventris; becauſe, if parted with, it tended to the health of the body, and might be hurtful if ſuppreſſed. Seld. De Diis Syris, Proleg. cap. 3. p. 61. Edit. Lipſ. Orig. cont. Celſ. lib. v. p. 255.

the

the phyſician (*u*). But Balbus, who is the repreſentative of the Stoics in Cicero, and who ſeems to ſpeak Cicero's own ſentiments, is of a different opinion. He thinks it was wiſely ordered, both by the wiſeſt men among the Greeks and by the antient Romans, that whatever was of great advantage to human life, and which they looked upon to be owing to the divine goodneſs towards mankind, ſhould be called by the name of the god from whom it came, as when we call corn Ceres, and wine Bacchus: and that whenever there is any great force or virtue in any thing, it is proper that that very thing ſhould be called god (*x*). Thus did theſe wiſe men contrive to find out plauſible pretences in their great wiſdom, for giving that honour to the works themſelves, which ſhould have been appropriated to God the glorious author; and, inſtead of being led by his gifts beſtowed upon them to render due acknowledgments to him the ſovereign Donor, they turned thoſe very gifts into deities.

Balbus goes on, in the place now referred to, to mention the temples which were erected to mind, faith, virtue, health, concord, honour, victory, Liberty; and that becauſe the force of theſe things was ſo great, that it could not be governed without a god, the thing itſelf obtained the name of god. "Quarum "omnium rerum quia vis erat tanta, ut ſine Deo regi non poſſit, "ipſa res Deorum nomen obtinuit (*y*)."

(*u*) De Iſ. et Oſir. Oper. tom. ii. p. 377. E.

(*x*) De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 23. p. 161.

(*y*) Ibid. p. 162.

And this leads to another obſervation, which ſhews the ſtrong bent the Heathens had to polytheiſm. The qualities and affections of rational beings, and even the accidents which relate to them, were made perſons of, and turned into deities, and as ſuch had divine worſhip paid them. And this honour was rendered not only to qualities and accidents that were good and uſeful, but to thoſe that were bad and hurtful: "So great was the error," ſaith Cotta in Cicero, "that even to pernicious things not only "was the name of gods attributed, but holy rites were inſti-"tuted.—Tantus error fuit, ut pernicioſis etiam rebus, non modo "Deorum nomen tribueretur, ſed etiam ſacra conſtituerentur." And he inſtances in the temple erected at Rome to the fever, and an altar to evil fortune (*z*). And he had before obſerved, that tempeſts were deified and conſecrated by the Roman people (*a*). An antient monument of which was dug up in the laſt century at the Porta Capena (*b*). Yea even the names of vicious things were conſecrated; as of luſt and pleaſure. "Cupidinis et voluptatis, "et lubentinæ veneris vocabula conſecrata ſunt, vitioſarum "rerum, neque naturalium (*c*)." To this St. Auſtin refers De Civit. Dei. lib. iv. cap. 8. where he mentions the temple of Volupia, the goddeſs of pleaſure, ſo called from voluptas, pleaſure; and of Libentina, the goddeſs of luſt, ſo called from libido, luſt. Varro mentions the ſame goddeſſes, and gives the ſame etymology of their names. And the Athenians, by the advice of Epimenides,

(*z*) De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 25. p. 314.

(*a*) Ibid. cap. xx. p. 297.

(*b*) Seld. De Diis Syris, Proleg. cap. iii. p. 59.

(*c*) De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 23. p. 162.

who paſſed among them for a great diviner and prophet, erected a temple to contumely and impudence; " ὕβρις καὶ ἀναίδεια." Cicero, who takes notice of this in his Second Book of Laws, cap. xi. p. 116, 117. paſſes a juſt cenſure upon it, and condemns the erecting temples and altars to things hurtful and vicious. But he there approves the erecting temples to virtuous affections and qualities, as alſo to things that are deſirable, as health, honour, victory, &c. though in his Third Book De Natura Deorum, cap. xxiv. he, in the perſon of Cotta, repreſents it as abſurd to make deities of the qualities that are in us, or of the events which befal us. And Pliny ſays, " Innumeros quidem " [deos] credere, atque etiam ex virtutibus vitiiſque hominum, " ut pudicitiam, concordiam, mentem, ſpem, honorem, cle- " mentiam, fidem, aut (ut Democrito placet) duos omninò, pœ- " nam et beneficium, majorem ad ſocordiam accedit." Hiſt. Naturalis, lib. ii. cap. 7.

Upon the whole, there was ſcarce any thing in nature, but what ſome or other of the Heathens worſhipped and made a god of (*d*). Lord Herbert, who does all he can to juſtify or excuſe the Pagan idolatry and polytheiſm, yet concludes the tenth chapter of his book De Religione Gentilium, with obſerving, That the Gentiles did not only worſhip the whole world taken together, but its parts, yea even its particles or ſmaller parts; thinking it un-

(*d*) St. Auſtin has given a long liſt of Heathen deities, and the offices aſſigned to them, from Varro. De Civit. Dei. lib. iv. cap. 8. And a ſtill larger catalogue of them, ibid. cap. 11. et cap. 16, et cap. 21. The reader may alſo ſee a great number of them mentioned by Arnobius adverſ. Gentes, lib. iv. p. 128, et ſeq.

becoming,

becoming, that ſome of the more eminent parts of him whom they regarded as God ſhould be worſhipped, and other parts neglected. And therefore they judged, that it would be a baſe and impious thing to render worſhip to this or that ſtar or element, and reject the others as vile and worthleſs. And in worſhipping the world as conſiſting of thoſe parts, they thought they worſhipped the Supreme God in the beſt image of the Divinity (*e*).

Thus there was an univerſal idolatry introduced and ſupported under various pretences, and practiſed not only by the vulgar, but by thoſe that put on the appearance of wiſdom and philoſophy. I ſhall here ſubjoin ſome obſervations of the very learned Dr. Cudworth, relating to this matter; and I the rather chooſe to do this, both becauſe he is known to have ſearched with great learning and diligence into the depths of the Pagan theology; and becauſe he cannot be reaſonably ſuſpected of a deſign to aggravate the charge againſt them: ſince, on the contrary, he appears to have been ſtrongly inclined to repreſent the ſtate of the Heathen world in the moſt favourable light.

" It cannot be denied," ſaith that excellent author, " that the " Pagans did in ſome ſenſe or other deify or theologize all the " parts of the world, or things of nature." And again, " In their " theologizing of phyſiology, and deifying the things of nature " and parts of the world, they did accordingly call every thing

(*e*) De Relig. Gentil. p. 133, 134. Edit. Amſtel. 8vo. 1700.

" the name of God, and God by the name of every thing (*f*)." To the ſame purpoſe he expreſſeth himſelf in ſeveral other places. And can any thing be more diſhonourable to the Deity, more unworthy of his Divine Majeſty, or have a worſe effect on religion, than thus in their worſhip to confound God and the creature, inſtead of rendering him that ſingular honour and adoration which his own infinite perfections and his unparalleled dignity juſtly demand from us?

The ſame celebrated writer obſerves, that " the Pagans in ge-
" neral, even the moſt refined of them, agreed in theſe two
" things; firſt, in breaking and crumbling the one ſimple deity,
" and multiplying it into many gods, or parcelling it out into
" ſeveral particular notions, according to its ſeveral powers and
" virtues; and then in theologizing the whole world, and deify-
" ing the natures of things, accidents, and inanimate bodies.
" They ſuppoſing God to pervade all things, and himſelf to be
" in a manner all things (*g*)." And that therefore he might be worſhipped in every thing. This is one remarkable inſtance, among many which might be mentioned, of the extravagancies to which human reaſon is ſubject; and how apt thoſe are who have the higheſt opinion of their own wiſdom, when left to themſelves, to draw wrong concluſions from the beſt principles. So the Heathens did from the notion of God's univerſal preſence, and his providence as extending to all his works. With reſpect to what Dr. Cudworth calls their crumbling the one ſimple deity into

(*f*) Intel. Syſt. p. 507. 515.

(*g*) Ibid. p. 532, 533.

parts,

parts, he produces a remarkable paſſage from Pliny, Nat. Hiſt. lib. ii. cap. 7. " Fragilis et laborioſa mortalitas, in partes iſto " digeſſit, infirmitatis ſuæ memor, ut in portionibus quiſque co- " leret, quo maxime indigeret." Which he tranſlates thus; " Frail and toilſom mortality has thus broken and crumbled the " deity into parts, mindful of its own infirmity, that ſo every one, " by parcels and pieces, might worſhip that in God which him- " ſelf ſtands moſt in need of."

To what has been offered concerning the Pagan idolatry, might be added the worſhip of dæmons or genii, which prevailed mightily in the Heathen world. Theſe were accounted a middle kind of beings, inferior to the celeſtial gods, but ſuperior to men. There were ſuppoſed to be vaſt numbers of them, of different kinds, to all of whom they thought religious worſhip was due. But not to inſiſt upon this at preſent, I would obſerve, that it was an uſual thing among the Heathens to worſhip evil beings, and to render them religious honours, that they might not hurt them. Plutarch, De Placitis Philoſophorum, having diſtributed the whole doctrine relating to the worſhip of the gods into ſeven parts, takes notice in the ſecond and third place, that they diſtinguiſhed the gods into thoſe that were favourable and beneficial to mankind, ſuch as Jupiter, Juno, Mercury, Ceres, and thoſe that were hurtful, ſuch as the Diræ, Furies, and Mars, whom, as being cruel and violent, they endeavoured to appeaſe and conciliate by ſacred rites (*b*). And in his treatiſe De Iſide et

(*b*) Plutarch. Oper. tom. ii. p. 880. Edit. Francof. 1620.

Oſiride,

Oſiride, he cites with approbation the opinion of Xenocrates, who ſpeaking of unlucky days and feſtivals, which were celebrated by ſcourgings, beatings, lamentations, faſtings, ill-boding words, and obſcene expreſſions, would not allow that they were pleaſing or agreeable to the gods or good dæmons; but that there were in the air about us certain great and powerful natures, of a croſs and moroſe temper, which take pleaſure in thoſe things, and having obtained them do no farther miſchief (*i*). And he obſerves, that the Egyptians were wont on ſome occaſions to worſhip Typhon, whom they looked upon to be an evil power, with certain ſacrifices, in order to appeaſe and conſole him; though there were alſo ſolemnities, in which they reproached and curſed him (*k*). And, in his treatiſe De Oraculorum defectu, he makes mention of certain feſtivals and ſacrifices, in which among the ſacred rites were reckoned the eating raw fleſh, the tearing of their fleſh or members, διασπάσμοι, (for this ſeems to be the meaning of it by comparing it with Porphyr. De Abſtinentia, lib. ii. ſect. 45.) doleful lamentations, obſcene words, furious ravings, &c. Theſe, he thinks, were inſtituted for pleaſing evil and malignant dæmons, and averting their wrath (*l*). The ſame judgment he paſſes upon human ſacrifices; which, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew, were very generally offered in the Pagan world, even to thoſe that were accounted their principal deities. Porphyry, that zealous and able advocate for Paganiſm, affirms, that there are

(*i*) Plut. ubi ſupra, p. 361. B.

(*k*) Ibid. p. 362. E.

(*l*) Ibid. p. 417. C. D.

male-

malevolent and noxious dæmons who dwell in the ſpaces near the earth. He repreſents them as the authors of all the calamities which infeſt mankind, and that there is no kind of miſchief which they are not ready to attempt: that it is their property to lie; and that they endeavour to turn men off from right thoughts of the gods, and to draw their regards to themſelves, having an ambition to be accounted gods: and that the chief and moſt powerful among them covets to be eſteemed the greateſt or the ſupreme god (*m*). And he plainly intimates, that men generally rendered them religious worſhip. He ſays, that cities found it neceſſary to appeaſe and humour them by prayers and ſacrifices: it being in the power of thoſe dæmons to beſtow riches, and external things relating to the body; and he gives it as the opinion of the Theologues, that it is neceſſary for thoſe who are attached to theſe external goods, and cannot as yet reſtrain and govern their appetites, to endeavour to avert the wrath and power of theſe dæmons, otherwiſe they ſhall never be free from troubles and vexations (*n*). He had before repreſented it as a perſuaſion which generally obtained concerning all the dæmons, whether good or bad, and whether worſhipped under particular names or not, that they will grow angry and hurt men, if they are neglected, and have not due honour and worſhip paid them; and, on the other hand, will do good to thoſe who endeavour to gratify them, by ôffering to them prayers, ſupplications, and ſacrifices. And he ſays, that the man that is ſtudious of piety does not ſacri-

(*m*) Porphyr. De Abſtin. lib. ii. ſect. 39, 40. 42. p. 83, 84. Edit. Cantabrig. 1655.

(*n*) Ibid. ſect. 43. p. 86, 87.

fice any thing which has life, i. e. any animal, to the gods, but to dæmons and other beings, both to the good and even to the bad. " Ὁ εὐσεβείας φροντίζων ὡς θεοῖς μὲν οὐ θύεται ἔμψυχον οὐδὲν " δαίμοσι δὲ καὶ ἄλλοις ἤτοι ἀγαθοῖς ἢ καὶ φαύλοις (o)." Where he ſuppoſes that a pious man will worſhip and offer ſacrifices to evil dæmons as well as good beings. The ſame Porphyry, as cited by Euſebius, looked upon Hecate, a goddeſs had in great veneration among the Pagans [as appears from Heſiodi Theogonia, verſ. 410. et ſeq. and Potter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. i. p. 351.] to be an evil dæmon; and that Serapis, the great Egyptian deity, who, Plutarch tells us, was the common god of all the Egyptians, and the ſame with Oſiris (p), was the chief or prince of evil dæmons; and that many of thoſe who delivered oracles were ſo (q). Thus we have the teſtimony of a very eminent Pagan philoſopher, and who was a bitter enemy to Chriſtianity, to the truth of what St. Paul declares, that " the things which the Gentiles ſacrificed " they ſacrificed to devils, [to dæmons, and even evil ones] " and not to God." 1 Cor. x. 20. And if this was true, even of the polite and civilized Heathens within the limits of the Roman empire, we are the leſs to be ſurprized at the accounts which are given us by authors of good credit, of the worſhip that has been paid to evil beings in ſome other parts of the world. We are told concerning the antient Zabians, that they worſhipped whom they called Sammael, and whom they regarded as an evil

(o) Porphyr. De Abſtin. ſect. 36, 37. p. 80, 81.

(p) Plut. De Iſid. et Oſir. Oper. tom. ii. p. 362. B.

(q) Apud Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. iv. cap. 22, 23. p. 174, 175.

ſpirit,

ſpirit, and the prince of the dæmons (*r*). The Perſians worſhipped Arimanius, whom they looked upon to be an evil principle. The like account is given of the people of Pegu, Decan, Narſinga, and other places in the Eaſt-Indies. It is ſaid alſo, that evil ſpirits are worſhipped in Japan, and in the iſlands of Formoſa, Ceylon, and Madagaſcar. The ſame thing is related of the Hottentots, and other African nations. The like practice obtained in ſeveral parts of America, particularly among the antient inhabitants of Canada, Terra firma, Braſil, and Chili. Moſt of theſe nations believe a god or gods, and ſome of them one Supreme God, and that he is good: and yet they worſhip an evil being or beings, conſidered as ſuch, from a fear of being otherwiſe hurt and deſtroyed by them. This undoubtedly ſhews, that the Pagan ideas of a Deity and a Providence were extremely defective and imperfect: for, if they had right notions of either, they muſt have been convinced, that to worſhip evil beings is to offer the greateſt indignity to an infinitely wiſe, powerful, and good God, as if he were not able to protect his faithful ſervants and worſhippers againſt their power and malice. But the Chriſtian revelation teacheth us to form nobler notions. Happy thoſe that know how to value and improve ſo great an advantage (*s*)!

Some hints were given above of the idolatry of the antient Egyptians: but it may not be improper here to take a more

(*r*) Hottinger Hiſt. Oriental. lib. i. cap. 8. and Stanley's Hiſtory of Philoſ. p. 1065.

(*s*) The reader may find the inſtances here referred to confirmed by proper authorities in Millar's Hiſtory of the Propagation of Chriſtianity, vol. ii. chap. 7.

diſtinct notice of it. The Egyptians were a nation antiently very famous for their wiſdom and knowledge. Herodotus declares, that they "were eſteemed to be the wiſeſt of mankind—" and that "in wiſdom they excelled all other mortals." Lib. ii. cap. 16. et 121. From Egypt, as was before obſerved, Greece originally derived her ſcience and theology. Diodorus affirms, that moſt of thoſe among the Greeks, who were honoured for their underſtanding and knowledge, ſeveral of whom he particularly mentions, did in antient times reſort to Egypt, that they might be acquainted with the laws and learning of the Egyptians. Yet no nation became more deeply immerſed in idolatry. They not only paid divine honours to the Ibis and Ichneumon, which were uſeful to them, but to the crocodile, the dog, cat, and many other animals (*t*). Some modern writers have affected not to believe that ſo wiſe a nation could be guilty of an idolatry ſo ſtupid. But there is ſcarce any thing in all antiquity that comes to us better atteſted. They were on this account the objects of ridicule to other Pagan nations. See to this purpoſe Cicero De Nat. Deorum, lib. i. cap. 16 et 29, et lib. iii. cap. 15. See alſo a paſſage of the poet Anaxandrides, in Athen. Deipnoſoph. lib. vii. According to

(*t*) They are alſo charged with worſhipping plants, ſuch as onions, garlick, &c. Hence Juvenal derides them as having their gods growing in their gardens. But Mr. Goguet, in his book De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, &c. tom. i. p. 730, 731. obſerves, that the moſt antient and approved writers, who give any account of the affairs or cuſtoms of Egypt, ſuch as Herodotus, Plato, Ariſtotle, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, make no mention of this ſingular ſuperſtition, which they would not have omitted, if they had known that the Egyptians practiſed it. He thinks Juvenal is the firſt that has mentioned it. Lucian alſo has taken notice of it in his Jupiter Tragœdus. Theſe authors have been followed by others; but conſidering the ſatirical turn for which they are both ſo remarkable, he thinks they are not much to be depended upon.

Diodorus,

Diodorus, it was hard to make thoſe who had not been witneſſes of it, to believe the extravagancies the Egyptians were guilty of with regard to their ſacred animals (*u*). And Philo, who lived among them, charges them with worſhipping dogs, lions, wolves, crocodiles, and many other animals, both terreſtrial and aquatick. And he ſays, that all ſtrangers who came into Egypt were wont to laugh at them; and the more ſenſible travellers beheld them with aſtoniſhment and pity (*x*). Plutarch expreſly ſays, "that the "greater part of the Egyptians—Αἰγυπτίων οἱ πόλλοι, worſhip-"ping the animals themſelves—αὐτα ζῶα θεραπεύοντες;" thereby not only expoſed their ſacred ceremonies and worſhip to deriſion and contempt, but gave occaſion to horrid conceptions, producing in perſons of weak and ſimple minds an extravagance of ſuperſtition, and precipitating others of more ſubtil and daring ſpirits into atheiſtical and brutiſh opinions (*y*). An ingenious modern author, who is loth to believe what is ſaid of the Egyptian idolatry, ſays, by way of apology for them, that "the Egyp-"tians did not adore theſe things without aſcribing certain divine "virtues to them, or conſidering them as ſymbols of ſome in-

(*u*) Diod. Sic. lib. i. cap. 84.

(*x*) Philo De Decal. oper. p. 755. E.

(*y*) Plut. De Iſid. et Oſir. oper. tom. ii. p. 379. D. E. But from theſe muſt be excepted the inhabitants of Thebais; if what the ſame author informs us of be true, that when the other Egyptians paid their proportion of the taxes and contributions, appointed by the laws, towards maintaining the ſacred animals, the inhabitants of Thebais alone did not pay any thing, as thinking there is no mortal god; but worſhip him whom they call Kneph, as being unbegotten or unmade, and immortal. Ibid. p. 359. D.

" viſible power. (z)" But if it were ſo, it furniſhes a remarkable inſtance of the vanity of human wiſdom, if left to itſelf in matters of religion. For the ſymbols and hieroglyphics, upon which the wiſe men of Egypt ſo much valued themſelves, and in which ſuch profound wiſdom and ſcience was ſuppoſed to be contained, proved to be an occaſion of leading the people into the moſt abſurd and ſenſeleſs idolatry; to which they continued inviolably attached, notwithſtanding all the ridicule caſt upon them for it by other nations. Cotta in Cicero obſerves, that they ſhewed a greater regard to the beaſts which they worſhipped, than other nations did to their moſt holy temples and images: that there had been many inſtances of temples ſpoiled and images of the gods taken away out of the moſt holy places by the Romans: but it had never been heard of, that a crocodile, an ibis, or a cat, had been ill treated by the Egyptians. " Firmiores videas apud " eos opiniones de beſtiis quibuſdam, quam apud nos de ſanctiſ- " ſimis templis et ſimulacris deorum. Etenim fana multa expo- " liata, et ſimulacra deorum de locis ſanctiſſimis ablata vidimus a " noſtris; at verò ne fando quidem auditum eſt, crocodilum, aut " ibin, aut felem violatum ab Egyptiis." De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 29. See alſo Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. v. cap. 27.

(z) Chevalier Ramſay's Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, vol. ii. p. 53.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

The Pagan theology diſtributed by Varro *into three different kinds: the poetical or fabulous, the civil, and the philoſophical. The poetical or fabulous theology conſidered. The pretence, that we ought not to judge of the Pagan religion by the poetical mythology, examined. It is ſhewn, that the popular religion and worſhip was in a great meaſure founded upon that mythology, which ran through the whole of their religion, and was of great authority with the people.*

VARRO, who was accounted the moſt learned of the Romans, ſpeaks of three different kinds of theology among them: the mythical or fabulous, the phyſical or natural, and the civil or popular. The firſt is that of the poets; the ſecond that of the philoſophers; the third is that which is eſtabliſhed by public authority and the laws, and which is in uſe among the people (*a*). The famous Roman pontiff and lawyer Scævola makes the ſame diſtinction (*b*). So alſo does Plutarch (*c*).

It will be proper, in order to form a right judgment of the ſtate of religion among the Pagans, to take a view of theſe different kinds of theology.

(*a*) Apud Auguſtin. De Civit. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 5.

(*b*) Ibid. lib. iv. cap. 27.

(*c*) De Placit. Philoſ. lib. i. cap. 6. Opera. tom. ii. p. 880. A.

As to the mythical or fabulous theology, which was that of the poets, it is condemned in ſtrong terms both by Scævola and Varro. The former paſſes this juſt cenſure upon it, that it was nugatory, and that in it many unworthy things were feigned concerning the gods. And particularly he obſerves, that " they " make one god ſteal, another to commit adultery; they repre- " ſent three goddeſſes contending for the prize of beauty, and " that two of them in revenge for its being adjudged to Venus " ſubverted Troy; that Jupiter himſelf was converted into a bull " or a ſwan, that he might debauch ſome woman he had a fancy " for; that a goddeſs married a man; that Saturn devoured his " own children; and, in fine, nothing can be imagined ſo mon- " ſtrous or ſo vicious, but it may be found in the fables attri- " buted to the gods, however foreign to their nature.—Sic deos " deformant, ut nec bonis hominibus comparentur; cum alium " faciunt furari, alium adulterare; tres inter ſe deas certâſſe de " præmio pulchritudinis, victas duas a Venere Trojam ever- " tiſſe; Jovem ipſum converti in bovem aut cygnum, ut cum " aliquâ concumbat; deam homini nubere; Saturnum liberos " devorare: nihil denique poſſe confingi miraculorum atque viti- " orum quod non ibi reperiatur, atque ab deorum naturâ longè " abſit (*d*)." Varro paſſes the ſame judgment upon the fabulous poetical theology which Scævola did. And, after mentioning ſome of the ſame abſurdities, and others of the like kind, he concludes with ſaying, that " all things are attributed to the " gods, which men, and even the vileſt and worſt of men, could

(*d*) Auguſtin. De Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 27. p. 84. E. Ed. Reneu.

" be

" be guilty of.—Omnia diis attribuuntur, quæ non modo in ho-
" minem, ſed etiam quæ in contemtiſſimum hominem cadere
" poſſunt (*e*)." And long before them Plato had accuſed Heſiod, as guilty of the greateſt falſhood, and that in a matter of the utmoſt importance, when he mentions ſuch wicked things to have been perpetrated by Cælus, and his ſon Saturn; which, he thinks, if true, ought not to have been mentioned, eſpecially to inconſiderate and young perſons, but to have been buried in ſilence, or communicated only to a few. He pronounces theſe fables to be pernicious, and not fit to be heard in a well-ordered commonwealth. And afterwards mentioning what Homer ſays of the quarrel between Jupiter and Juno, and Vulcan's being hurled down by Jupiter from heaven for taking Juno's part, as alſo what the ſame poet relates concerning the battles and contentions of the gods, he declares, that theſe ſtories are not to be admitted, whether they are pretended to have an hidden allegorical meaning or not. See his ſecond book De Republica, at the latter end (*f*). Cicero alſo paſſes a ſevere cenſure upon the poetical fables (*g*).

Conſidering this and other paſſages to the ſame purpoſe, which occur in ſome of the moſt eminent Pagan writers, it may be looked upon as an unfair thing to judge of the antient religion of the Heathens by the writings of the poets and mythologiſts. And accordingly they, who endeavour to repreſent that religion in the

(*e*) Auguſtin. De Civ. Dei. lib. vi. cap. 5. p. 116. E.

(*f*) Plat. Oper. Ficin. p. 429, 430. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

(*g*) De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 16. et lib. ii. cap. 7.

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moſt advantageous light, are for entirely diſcarding the poetical mythology. This is Lord Herbert's ſcheme. He mightily inveighs againſt the poets, as having confounded and polluted the Heathen theology, and left nothing ſound or pure in their hiſtory or religion; and that therefore no regard is to be had to them in this matter (*b*).

And yet certain it is, that in examining into the religion of the antient Gentiles, the poetical mythology, notwithſtanding the cenſures ſo freely beſtowed upon it, muſt neceſſarily be conſidered. It may juſtly be affirmed, that the writings of the poets tend to give us the trueſt idea of the Pagan religion, as it obtained even among the polite and learned nations of Greece and Rome, and as it was eſtabliſhed by public authority. Whoſoever will carefully conſult the account given by Potter, in his excellent antiquities of Greece, of the numerous ſacred feſtivals and rites obſerved and celebrated in Greece, and eſpecially at Athens, will find that they are almoſt all founded upon the fables of the poetical mythology (*i*). The ſame may be ſaid of many of thoſe obſerved by the antient Romans.

(*b*) "Licentiâ quippe poeticâ uſi muſarum alumni, ita omnia temerabunt, ut "quid ad alterutras ſpectet partes nemo facili invenerit.—Faceſſant igitur, et ab "ipſa gentilium theologiâ exulent poetæ; non ſolùm quippe veras heroum hiſ-"torias, ex fabularum interpolatione ſuſpectas, ne dicam falſas, etiam mortalium "crediliſſimis reddiderunt: ſed et fabulas haſce myſticis involutiſque quibuſdam, "circa cœlum, aſtra, et elementa doctrinis, admiſcentes, nihil integrum, nihil "ſanum, vel in hiſtoria, vel in ipſa religione reliquere." Herb. De Relig. Gentil. cap. xi. p. 135. Edit. Amſtel. 8vo.

(*i*) See Potter's Antiquities, vol. i. chap. 20. from p. 326 to p. 407.

The poets, as Dr. Cudworth obſerves, were the prophets of the Pagans, and pretended to a kind of divine inſpiration. And though he treats them as the great depravers of the Pagan theology, yet he ſays, " they imbued the minds of the vulgar with " a certain ſenſe of religion, and the notions of morality (*k*)". And that " we cannot make a better judgment concerning the " vulgar and generality of the antient Pagans than from the poets " and mythologiſts, who were the chief inſtructors of them (*l*)". And to this purpoſe he obſerves, that Ariſtotle, in his Politics, lib. viii. cap. 5. writing of muſic, judgeth of men's opinions concerning the gods by the poets. " We may learn," ſays Ariſtotle, " what opinion men have of the gods from hence, becauſe the " poets never bring in Jupiter ſinging, or playing on an inſtru- " ment." Varro tells us, that " with regard to what relates to " the generations of the gods, the people were more inclined to " the poets than to the natural philoſophers: and that therefore " their anceſtors, the antient Romans, believed the ſexes and " generations and marriages of the gods (*m*)." And though Plato, in the paſſage above referred to in the ſecond book of his Republic, diſapproves the fables of the poets and mythologiſts, even if they ſhould be allegorically interpreted, yet ſuch was the authority of thoſe fables and traditions, that in his Timæus, one of his beſt and lateſt treatiſes, he dares not openly reject them. He

(*k*) Intel. Syſt. p. 355.

(*l*) Ibid. p. 448.

(*m*) " Dicit Varro de generationibus deorum magis ad poetas quàm ad phyſicos " fuiſſe populos inclinatos, et ideo et ſexum et generationes deorum, majores ſuos, " id eſt veteres credidiſſe Romanos, et eorum conſtituiſſe conjugia." Ap. Auguſtin. C. D. lib. iv. cap. 32. p. 88.

declines treating of the generation of the gods or dæmons, under pretence that theſe things were too high for him. And then adds, " We are to believe thoſe who before had given an account " of theſe things, as being ſprung from the gods, as they them- " ſelves declare, and who therefore muſt have known their own " progenitors. For," ſays he, " it is impoſſible not to believe " the ſons of the gods, though they give no neceſſary or pro- " bable reaſons for what they ſay. But, it becomes us, follow- " ing what the law directs, ἑπομένες τῷ νόμῳ, to give them cre- " dit, as ſpeaking of their own proper affairs." And then he goes on to mention ſome of the things delivered in Heſiod's Theogonia. Plato ſeems here to inſinuate the true reaſon why he did not think fit to reject thoſe traditions. It is becauſe they were favoured and authorized by the laws.

The ſame celebrated philoſopher, in his Ion, in the perſon of Socrates, gives ſuch an account of the poets, as muſt needs tend greatly to ſtrengthen their authority with the people. His deſign there is to ſhew, that poetry, and the interpretation of it, is not merely the effect of art or induſtry, but owing to a kind of divine afflatus. " The poet cannot ſing," ſays he, " except he " be full of God, and carried out of himſelf." And again, " They do not ſay theſe things by art, but by a divine power.— " Ὁ γὰρ τεχνῇ ταῦτα λέγουσιν ἀλλὰ θεία δυνάμει:" or, as he had expreſſed it juſt before, θεία μοίρᾳ: that " God uſes them as " his miniſters, as he does the deliverers of oracles and divine " prophets, that we hearing them might know, that it is not they

(n) Plat. Oper. Ficin. p. 530. F. G.

" themſelves who ſpeak thoſe excellent things, ſince they have " not then the uſe of their underſtanding, but that it is God that " ſpeaks by them; and that the poets are no other than the in- " terpreters of the gods. Οἱ δε ποιηται ὐδέν ἀλλ' ἢ ἑρμενεῖς ἐισι " τῶν θεῶν—whilſt they are thus inſpired, by whatever god they " are poſſeſſed (*o*)." And Socrates, in his Apology to his Judges, gives the ſame idea of poetry and the poets. He repreſents them as acting not by their own wiſdom, but by a certain divine inſtinct or afflatus, like the prophets of God and deliverers of oracles—" ὥσπερ οἱ θεομάντεις καὶ οἱ χρησμωδοὶ (*p*)."

Many paſſages might be quoted from eminent Pagan writers, expreſſing their approbation of the poets, and their theology. A paſſage was cited above from Dio Chryſoſtomus, orat. 36. in which he plainly intimates the great authority which the poets and their theology had with the people; and that it was to the Jupiter of the poets that men every where erected altars and paid their devotions. Max. Tyrius, ſpeaking of Homer's repreſentations of the deities, ſays, that " the ignorant man hears them as " fables, but the philoſopher as realities:" and he mentions it to his praiſe, that " to Homer no part of the world is without a " God, nor deſtitute of a ruler, or without government; but all " things are full of divine names, and a divine art (*q*)." And Proclus, in Tim. Plat. ſpeaking of the divine Homer, as he calls

(*o*) Plat. Oper. p. 145. F. G.

(*p*) Ibid. p. 360. G.

(*q*) Max. Tyr. Diſſert. 16. p. 198. Edit. Oxon. 1677.

him, ſaith, that " throughout all his poetry he praiſes Jupiter as " the higheſt of all Rulers, and the father of gods and men; " and attributes all demiurgical notions to him (*r*)."

The Stoics, who were the moſt rigid ſect of Pagan philoſophers, were not for rejecting the poetical fables; but endeavoured to explain them in an allegorical way. Zeno, as Velleius in Cicero obſerves, in interpreting Heſiod's Theogonia, attributed the names of Jupiter, Juno, Veſta, to natural and inanimate things (*s*). And Cotta upbraids the Stoics, that inſtead of confuting thoſe fables, they confirmed them by their interpretations. " Veſtri autem," ſays he to Balbus the Stoic, " non modo hæc non refellunt, " vorum etiam cenfirmant, interpretando quorſum quidque per- " tineat (*t*). He ridicules them for taking a great deal of pains to little purpoſe, in endeavouring to give reaſons for fictitious fables, as if there was much wiſdom contained in them: as alſo for their etymological accounts of the names of the gods: and he intimates, that the pains they took to explain theſe things ſhewed that the accounts they gave were forced, and contrary to the general opinion. " Magnam moleſtiam ſuſcepit et minimè neceſ-

(*r*) Ap. Cudw. Intel. Syſt. p. 360. One part of the charge advanced againſt the poets by Dr. Cudworth and others is, " that they perſonated the ſeveral inanimate " parts of the world, and things of nature, which produced a vaſt number of gods " and goddeſſes." But this charge lies equally againſt ſome of the moſt celebrated philoſophers; for they alſo deified the things of nature, and the parts of the world. And this was, by that learned writer's own acknowledgment, the prevailing philoſophy.

(*s*) De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 14. p. 38.

(*t*) Ibid. lib. iii. cap. 23, p. 312.

" ſariam primus Zeno, poſt Cleanthes, deinde Chryſippus, com-
" mentitiarum fabularum reddere rationem: vocabulorum, cur
" quique ita appellati ſint, cauſas explicare. Quod cùm facitis,
" illud profectò confitemini, longè aliter ſe rem habere, atque
" hominum opinio ſit (*u*)."

How much the poetical theology prevailed, and what a regard was had to the fables of the mythologiſts, among the generality of the Pagans, and even among the Athenians themſelves, the moſt learned and religious people in Greece, appears from the treatment Socrates met with for oppoſing thoſe fables, as he himſelf intimates in Plato's Euthyphron. He there particularly refers to the fabulous traditions concerning Saturn's caſtrating and dethroning his father Cælus, and Jupiter's caſting his father Saturn into priſon for devouring his ſons, by which Euthyphron endeavoured to juſtify himſelf for accuſing and proſecuting his own father. Socrates, whoſe deſign it is to make him ſenſible of the abſurdity of the literal ſenſe of thoſe fables, tells him, that this was the very thing for which he [Socrates] was accuſed, becauſe when he heard any man ſay ſuch things of the gods, he ſhewed his diſlike of them (*x*).

After Chriſtianity made its appearance in the world, the Pagans, when charged with the abſurdities of the mythological fables, were wont to throw it off, by pretending, that theſe were only poeti-

(*u*) De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 24. p. 314.

(*x*) Plato Oper. Ficin. p. 49. F. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

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cal fictions. But from the obſervations which have been made it ſufficiently appears, that, in conſidering the Pagan theology, a particular regard muſt be had to the mythology of the poets, which was wrought into the popular religion, and lay at the foundation of moſt of their ſacred rites, and public worſhip. And yet nothing can give us a more melancholy idea of the ſtate of religion among the antient Heathens, even in the moſt polite and civilized nations. The ſyſtem of the poetical theology was full of the genealogies, the rapes, the adulteries, the contentions of their gods. Theſe things were acted on the theatres with the applauſe and approbation of the people. Theſe were the deities, to whom temples and altars were erected, and ſacrifices offered; to whoſe ſtatues they paid divine honours, and whom the poets ſung in all the charms of flowing numbers.

Euſebius has ſome juſt obſervations with regard to the Pagan mythology, which it may not be amiſs to mention in this place. The ſubſtance of what he ſays is this. That when the antients deified their princes and great men, and the inventers of uſeful things, being filled with admiration, they made them the objects of their worſhip, and applied the venerable idea they had of God in their minds, to thoſe their kings and benefactors. They carried their reſpect for them to ſuch a degree of extravagance, as to celebrate all their actions, even their acts of violence, their lewdneſſes, their wars, and contentions: the memory of which, as of ſome great exploits, was tranſmitted with applauſe to poſterity, and entered into the worſhip that was paid to them, being mixed with

with the ideas of their divinity. But afterwards, ſome of later times, and who were comparatively of yeſterday, being aſhamed of theſe things, and pretending to a more ſubtil kind of philoſophy, endeavoured to turn them into allegory, and interpreted them as ſignifying phyſical cauſes, and the phænomena of nature. But he very properly obſerves, that though they uſed their utmoſt efforts, by forced explications, to put a plauſible colour upon the theology of the antients, and the ſtories of their gods, yet none of them attempted to make the leaſt alteration in the antient religious rites, which were founded on the literal ſenſe of thoſe ſtories; but were rather for preſerving them, and profeſſed a great veneration for the religion derived to them from their anceſtors, of which theſe things made a part (*y*).

To this judgment of Euſebius, concerning the fables of the antient mythology, may be added that of Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus. This celebrated critic and hiſtorian, in the firſt book of his Roman Hiſtory, does not deny that ſome of thoſe fables might poſſibly in ſome caſes be of uſe; yet obſerves, that ſmall was the benefit which could accrue from them, and this only to thoſe who could penetrate into their hidden meaning and deſign. But that few there were who attained to this kind of philoſophy: and the rude and unlearned multitude loved to take thoſe ſtories concerning the gods in the groſſeſt ſenſe, and were thereby in danger either of contemning the gods, or of giving themſelves

(*y*) Præpar. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 6. p. 73, 74. Edit. Paris, 1628.

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an unreſtrained liberty in committing the baſeſt and wickedeſt actions, when they ſaw that the gods themſelves warranted them by their practice. This paſſage of Dionyſius is cited with approbation by Lord Herbert, De Relig. Gentil. cap. xi. p. 130, et 136. Edit. Amſtel. 8vo.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The civil theology of the Pagans conſidered. That of the antient Romans has been much commended, yet became in proceſs of time little leſs abſurd than the poetical, and in many inſtances was cloſely connected and complicated with it. The pernicious conſequences of this to religion and morals. Some account of the abſurd and immoral rites which were antiently practiſed in the moſt civilized nations, and which made a part of their religion; being either preſcribed by the laws, or eſtabliſhed by cuſtoms which had the force of laws. The politicans and civil magiſtrates took no effectual methods to rectify this, but rather countenanced and abetted the popular ſuperſtition and idolatry.

FROM the poetical or fabulous let us proceed to the civil theology of the Pagans, which was the public and authorized religion, eſtabliſhed by the legiſlators and the magiſtrates, or chief men of the community, the Principes Civitatis, as Varro calls them. And this is the rather to be conſidered, as it was that which the philoſophers themſelves, whatever private opinions or ſpeculations they might entertain, or diſpute of in their ſchools, univerſally conformed to in their own practice, and alſo exhorted others to do ſo. It muſt therefore be allowed by all, that from this we may juſtly take our meaſures of the ſtate of religion in the Heathen world. Varro deſcribes it to be that which ought to be known and practiſed by the citizens, and which was adminiſtered

by the prieſts: and that it particularly determined what gods they were publicly to worſhip, what ſacred rites they were to obſerve, and what ſacrifices to offer. "Quod in urbibus cives, maximè "ſacerdotes, noſſe et adminiſtrare debent. In quo eſt, quos deos "publicè colere, quæ ſacra et ſacrificia facere quemque par "ſit (*a*)."

And in conſidering the civil theology of the Pagans, I ſhall have a particular regard to that of the Romans. Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus praiſes the Roman inſtitutions of religion, eſpecially thoſe which were appointed at the firſt eſtabliſhment of their ſtate. He obſerves, that they made uſe of the beſt of the Græcian Inſtitutions, but did not admit any of thoſe fables of theirs which contained things unworthy of the gods into the public religion. And that in what related to the ſacred ceremonies and worſhip of the gods all things were done with a becoming piety and gravity, in which they far excelled both Greeks and Barbarians (*b*). The ordering of the public religion was all along in the hands of the wiſeſt and greateſt men of the ſtate. Cicero, in his Oratio pro domo ſua ad Pontifices, extols the wiſdom of their anceſtors in appointing, that the ſame perſons who had the chief adminiſtration in civil affairs, ſhould alſo preſide over the ceremonies of religion. He ſpeaks of the office of the prieſts with great reſpect; and tells them, that the honour and ſafety of the Commonwealth, the public liberty, the houſes and fortunes of the citizens,

(*a*) Varro ap. Auguſt. C. D. lib. vi. cap. 5. p. 117.

(*b*) Dion. Halic. Hiſtor. lib. ii.

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and the gods themſelves, were committed to their wiſdom and care. And in his Oratio de Haruſpicum Reſponſis, he mentions it as the peculiar praiſe of the Romans, that they were the moſt religious of all people, and excelled all nations in piety, and eſpecially in this eminent point of wiſdom, that they clearly perceived that all things are governed by the providence and divinity of the immortal gods (*c*).

Let us therefore enquire how the public religion ſtood with the antient Romans.

It is a general obſervation, which affects the whole civil theology of the Pagans, that of the Romans as well as of other Heathen nations, that the public worſhip which was inſtituted by their more celebrated legiſlators, and preſcribed and eſtabliſhed by the laws of their ſeveral cities and countries, was paid not to one only God, but to a multiplicity of deities. In the paſſage now quoted from Cicero, when he ſo highly extols the religion of the antient Romans, he takes particular notice of this, that they were perſuaded that all things are governed by the divinity of the immortal gods. Their religion therefore was properly polytheiſm. And the providence they acknowledged was the providence not of one God, but of many gods. Lord Bolingbroke indeed has

(*c*) " Quam volumus licet, patres conſcripti, ipſi nos amemus, tamen nec numero Hiſpanos, nec robore Gallos, nec callidſtate Pœnos, nec artibus Græcos, nec denique hoc ipſo hujus gentis et terræ domeſtico nativoque ſenſu, Italos ipſos ac Latinos; ſed pietate ac religione, atque hâc unâ ſapientiâ, quod Deorum immortalium numine omnia regi gubernarique perſpeximus, omnes gentes nationeſque ſuperavimus." Orat. De Haruſp. Reſponſ. N. 9.

taken upon him to affirm, " that the worſhip of this multiplicity " of gods, did not interfere with the Supreme Being in the minds " of thoſe who worſhipped them (*d*)." But I cannot ſee upon what foundation this can be pretended. The ſame author elſewhere ſpeaking of the crowd of divinities among the Heathens, declares, that " they intercepted the worſhip of the Supreme " Being; and that this monſtrous aſſemblage made the object of " vulgar adoration. (*e*)." It was to prevent this that all manner of worſhip of inferior deities was ſo ſtrictly prohibited in the law of Moſes, and the people were expreſly commanded to have no other gods but one; to worſhip the one true God, the creator of the univerſe, and him only; whereby it was glorioufly diſtinguiſhed from all other laws and conſtitutions. This conſtitution was peculiar to the Jews (*f*); and its being eſtabliſhed among them was

(*d*) Bol. Works, vol. v. p. 305. Edit. 4to.

(*e*) Ibid. vol. iv. p. 80, and 461.

(*f*) Dr. Hyde, in his celebrated book De Religione veterum Perſarum, has taken great pains to ſhew that the antient Perſians worſhipped the one true God. Some perſons of great learning and judgment have thought that his authorities were not ſufficient. But if we allow the account he gives to be a juſt one, they were inſtructed in the true antient patriarchal religion by their great progenitors Shem and Elam, who derived it from Noah and Adam, to whom it originally came by divine revelation. And, upon their deviating from it, the patriarch Abraham introduced a reformation among them; and when they again lapſed into the ſabaitical idolatry, they were reformed by Zerduſht or Zoroaſter, who lived in the reign of Guſhtaſp Loroaſp, or Darius Hyſtaſpes. And this Zerduſht, according to the accounts given of him by Dr. Hyde from the oriental writers, muſt have learned the principal things in his religion from the Jews; having been a diſciple of one of the Jewiſh prophets, and having incorporated many of the rites preſcribed in the law of Moſes into his own. This is what the learned Doctor ſets himſelf particularly to ſhew in his tenth chapter, the title of which runs thus; " Perſarum religio in multis con- " veniat cum Judaicâ, et ab eâ magnâ ex parte deſumpta fuit."

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owing not merely to the ſuperior wiſdom of their lawgiver, but to his having had the advantage of an extraordinary revelation from God, the authority of which was confirmed by a ſeries of the moſt illuſtrious divine atteſtations. Whereas among other nations, where the worſhip of many gods was countenanced and eſtabliſhed by the laws, they loſt and confounded the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God amidſt a multiplicity of idol deities, and ſerved and worſhipped the creature more than the Creator.

The learned Dr. Cudworth, though very much inclined to put the moſt favourable conſtruction upon the Pagan theology, acknowledges, that "the civil theology of the Pagans, as well as "the poetical, had not only many phantaſtic gods in it, but an "appearance of a plurality of independent deities; it making "ſeveral ſupreme in their ſeveral territories and functions: as one "to be the chief ruler over the heavens, another over the air, "another over the ſea, one to be the giver of corn, another of "wine, &c." And he produces a remarkable paſſage from Ariſtotle, in which he argues againſt Zeno thus. "Whereas Zeno "takes it for granted, that men have an idea in their minds of "God, as one the moſt excellent and powerful being of all: "this doth not ſeem to be according to the law; for there the "gods ſeem to be mutually better one than another, reſpectively "to ſeveral things. And therefore Zeno took not this account "of mankind from that which vulgarly ſeemeth (*g*)." Here

(*g*) See Ariſtotle's treatiſe De Xenophane, Zenone, et Gorgia Oper. tom. i. p. 1246. Edit. Paris 1629.

Ariſtotle

Ariſtotle intimates, that according to the laws of cities and countries, that is in the civil or political theology, there ſeems to be no one abſolutely powerful or all-perfect being, but a plurality of gods, one of which is ſuppoſed to be more powerful as to one thing, another as to another.

I do not deny that even the vulgar among the Pagan polytheiſts ſeem for the moſt part to have had ſome notion of one Supreme God. It was before obſerved, that the Jupiter in the Capitol was regarded by the Romans as the chief god in their religion, and the ſupreme object of their public worſhip. But it was ſhewn, that this Jupiter was confounded, in the popular notion, with the chief of the hero deities. They attributed to him a ſuperiority over the other gods, but ſeem to have regarded him as one of the ſame kind, though of greater eminency than the reſt. Accordingly they were worſhipped in conjunction with him: and it was common with the Pagans in general to ſpeak of God and the gods promiſcuouſly, becauſe they conſidered them all as making up one ſyſtem, and as joint-ſharers in the government of the world; having each of them their ſeveral territories and functions, as Dr. Cudworth expreſſes it in the paſſage above quoted from him. Servius on thoſe words of Virgil, Georgic. lib. i. verſ. 21.

" Dique deæque omnes ſtudium quibus arva tueri,"

obſerves, that, after a ſpecial invocation, he proceeds to a general one, leſt any deity ſhould be neglected. And he acquaints us, that this was agreeable to the conſtant cuſtom of the prieſts, who,

according to an antient rite in all their ſacred ceremonies and devotions, after addreſſing themſelves to the particular deities, to whom at that time it was neceſſary to offer up prayers and ſacrifices, were wont to invoke all the gods in general. " Poſt ſpe-
" cialem invocationem tranſit ad generalitatem, ne quod numen
" prætereat, more pontificum, per quos, ritu veteri, in omnibus
" ſacris, poſt ſpeciales Deos, quos ad ipſum ſacrum quod fiebat
" neceſſe erat invocare, generaliter omnia numina invocabantur."

This general view of the civil and popular theology of the Pagans might be ſufficient to ſhew the ſad ſtate of religion among them. But it will ſet this is a ſtronger light if we conſider more particularly what has been already hinted, that there was a very cloſe connection between their civil theology and that which is called the fabulous and poetical. The public religion was, as Dr. Cudworth acknowledges, " a ſtrange mixture, made up partly
" of the phyſical, partly of the poetical theology." And even with reſpect to Jupiter Capitolinus, he ſaith in a paſſage before quoted from him, that " it is plain, that here there is a certain mixture of
" the mythical or poetical theology, together with the natural, as
" almoſt every where elſe there was, to make up the civil theo-
" logy of the Pagans (*b*)." It is true, that thoſe great men Scævola and Varro paſſed a ſevere cenſure upon the mythology of the poets, as making unworthy repreſentations of the gods; and recommend the civil theology, which was eſtabliſhed by the laws, and adminiſtered by the prieſts, as that which alone the people ought to follow. And yet it is capable of a clear proof, that in

(*b*) Intel. Syſt. p. 450.

fact

fact no small part of the civil theology was founded upon the poetical mythology, or traditionary fables of the gods. This is what St. Austin has strongly urged against Varro in several parts of his great work De Civitate Dei. He very properly observes, that those poetical fables which Varro censures as unworthy of the gods, and as ascribing to them actions which none but the vilest of men could be guilty of, were not only permitted to be acted on the public theatres, and heard with pleasure by the people, but that they were regarded as things pleasing to the gods themselves, by which they were propitiated and rendered favourable. And accordingly they were taken into the public religion (*i*). Games were celebrated, and plays founded upon those. Fables were appointed to be acted by way of expiation to appease the gods; as if the exhibiting the representations of their own vicious exploits were the best way of putting them into good humour, and averting the tokens of their displeasure. Speaking of Jupiter's adulteries, and of his ravishing Ganymede, and carrying him off to be his cupbearer, he quotes that passage of Tully. "Fingebat hæc Homerus, et humana ad deos transferebat, divina mallem ad nos"—i. e. "Homer feigned these things, and ascribed "human actions and qualities to the gods; I had rather he had "raised men to an imitation of the divine (*k*)." Upon which he

(*i*) St. Austin upon this occasion exclaims, "O religiosas aures populares, atque "in his etiam Romanas! Quod de diis immortalibus philosophi disputant ferre "non possunt: Quod verò poetæ canunt, et histriones agunt—non solùm ferunt, "sed etiam libenter audiunt. Neque id tantum, sed diis quoque ipsis hæc placere, et per hæc eos placandos esse, decernunt." De Civ. Dei, lib. vi. chap. v. p. 117.

(*k*) Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. cap. 26.

asks,

aſks, " Cur ergo ludi ſcenici, ubi hæc dictitantur, cantitantur, " actitantur, eorum honoribus exhibentur? Inter res divinas a " doctiſſimis conſcribuntur?—Why then are thoſe plays in which " theſe things are frequently ſaid, ſung, and acted, exhibited to " the honour of the gods? And reckoned among ſacred things " even by the moſt learned? Here," adds he, " Cicero might " juſtly blame not the fictions of the poets, but the inſtitutions of " their anceſtors; who yet might plead for themſelves, that theſe " were things which the gods required, who threatened to in- " flict puniſhments if they were neglected, and ſhewed them- " ſelves pleaſed and gratified with the obſervation of them." Of which he produces an inſtance out of the Roman hiſtory, which is alſo related by Livy and Valerius Maximus (*l*). That learned Father frequently inſiſts upon this as a thing publicly known, and which could not be denied, that the public games and plays, in which the flagitious actions of their gods were repreſented, were on certain occaſions conſidered as acts of religion, encouraged by their deities, and celebrated as in honour to them (*m*). Arnobius, who was very well acquainted with the Pagan rites and uſages, makes the ſame obſervation, and particularly mentions Plautus's Amphytrio, as one of the plays which were thus acted (*n*). The ſame Arnobius juſtly upbraids the Heathens for aſcribing the moſt baſe and unworthy actions to him whom they deſcribed as the Father of gods and men, the chief God, the Thunderer, who

(*l*) De Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 26.

(*m*) Ibid. lib. ii. cap. 25, 26, 27.

(*n*) Arnob. adverſ. Gentes, lib. vii. p. 238. Edit. var. Lugd. Bat.

ſhakes heaven with his nod, and to whom they attributed the moſt divine titles. He thinks, that if they had any regard to piety or decency, the public authority ought to interpoſe, by forbidding ſuch repreſentations. Inſtead of which they encouraged them, and admitted them into their religion; whereas they would puniſh any man who ſhould caſt ſuch reflections upon a ſenator or magiſtrate (*o*). And it is a pertinent remark of St. Auſtin, that the Dii ſelecti, which were of the higheſt dignity, and concerning whom Varro wrote a particular treatiſe, had worſe things ſaid of them than the gods of an inferior order (*p*).

To ſhew the near connection there was between the civil and poetical theology, it is obſerved by the ſame author, that the images, forms, habits, and ornaments of their gods, their different ſexes and ages, as repreſented in their temples, and the ſacred feſtivals inſtituted to their honour, had all of them a reference to the fables of the poets and mythologiſts, and were founded upon them. And it is therefore with reaſon that he pronounces, that both the civil and the fabulous theology might each of them be called civil and each fabulous. The learned Dr. Cudworth, who ſometimes ſeems to think the fathers carried their charges againſt Paganiſm too far, yet approves this obſerva-

(*o*) Arnob. adverſ. Gentes, lib. iv. p. 140, 141. 149, 150.

(*p*) The ſelect gods, of whom Varro treats, were twenty in number, twelve males, and eight females. Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, the Sun, Orcus, Liber Pater, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Minerva, Venus, Veſta. Ap. Auguſt. De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 2. p. 125. et cap. 4. p. 127.

tion,

tion, and ſays, " it is truly affirmed by St. Auſtin, concerning " their mythical or fabulous, and their political or civil theology, " that both the fabulous theology of the Pagans was in part their " civil, and their civil was fabulous (*q*).—Et civilis et fabuloſa, " ambæ fabuloſæ ſunt, ambæque civiles. Ambas inveniet fabu- " loſas, qui vanitates et obſcænitates ambarum prudenter inſpexe- " rit: ambas civiles, qui ſcenicos ludos pertinentes ad fabuloſam, " in deorum civilium feſtivitatibus, et in urbium divinis rebus, " adverterit (*r*). Yea," he ſays, " that things may be found in " the books which treat of religion, and the ſacred rites, which " grave poets have thought unfit to be the ſubject of their " verſes.—Iſta in rerum divinarum libris reperiuntur, quæ graves " poetæ ſuis carminibus indigna duxerunt (*s*)."

Theſe things muſt needs have had the moſt pernicious conſe- quences in expoſing religion to contempt. The Heathen theo- logy had a natural tendency to introduce a ſpirit of irreligion and profaneneſs. The ſame gods, as St. Auſtin obſerves, were laughed at in the theatres, and adored in the temples. " Non " alii dii ridentur in theatris, quàm qui adorantur in templis; " nec aliis ludos exhibetis, quam quibus immolatis (*t*)."

There are ſome remarkable paſſages produced by the ſame ex- cellent writer out of a book of Seneca's, not now extant, De Su-

(*q*) Intel. Syſt. p. 477.

(*r*) De Civit. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 8. p. 120.

(*s*) Ibid. p. 118.

(*t*) Ibid. p. 117.

perſtitione, which is alſo referred to by Tertullian in his Apologetic, cap. 12. in which that great philoſopher and ſtateſman inveighs no leſs againſt the civil theology of the Romans, or the religion of the ſtate, than Varro had done againſt the fabulous or poetical. Speaking of the images of the gods, he finds fault with their giving them the forms and habits of men, wild beaſts, and fiſhes, and a mixture of ſexes: and ſays, "they call thoſe gods, "which, if they had life and breath, and a man ſhould meet "them unexpectedly, would paſs for monſters.—Numina vocant, "quæ, ſi ſpiritu accepto ſubitò occurrerent, monſtra haberentur." He expoſes the cruel and laſcivious rites made uſe of in the worſhip of ſeveral of their deities, eſpecially of the mother of the gods. And yet declares, "that a wiſe man will obſerve all theſe "things, not indeed as acceptable to the gods, but as command-"ed by the laws.—Quæ omnia ſapiens ſervabit, tanquam legibus "juſſa, non tanquam diis grata." And ſpeaking of that ignoble rabble of gods, as he calls them, which the ſuperſtition of many ages had heaped together, he ſaith, "we will ſo adore them, as "to remember that this worſhip is rather matter of cuſtom, than "founded in nature or truth.—Omnem iſtam ignobilem deorum "turbam quam longa ſuperſtitio congeſſit, ſic adorabimus, ut "meminerimus cultum iſtum magis ad morem quam ad rem "pertinere (*u*)." By this it appears, that in compliance with popular cuſtom and the laws, he was for adoring the rabble of gods which he deſpiſed; thus leading the people by his own practice and example to think that he himſelf approved that worſhip.

(*u*) Ap. Auguſt. ubi ſupra, lib. vi. chap. 10. p. 122, 123.

But that we may have a more thorough conviction of the deplorable ſtate of religion in the Heathen world, let us take a view of the abſurd and immoral rites made uſe of in the worſhip of their gods, and which were either preſcribed by the laws, or were eſtabliſhed cuſtoms, countenanced by the magiſtrates, and which had obtained the force of laws, and may therefore be regarded as belonging to the public religion of the Pagans.

I ſhall not take notice of thoſe rites of their worſhip which were merely ridiculous, of which many might be mentioned; but only of thoſe which were of a bad and immoral nature and tendency, and which were either cruel and inhuman, or laſcivious and impure.

Among thoſe of the former kind was the offering up of human ſacrifices, which for many ages was very general in the Pagan world. It were eaſy to heap up many teſtimonies to this purpoſe from credible and approved authors. It obtained among the Phœnicians, Syrians, and Arabians, as alſo among the Carthaginians and other people of Afric, and among the Egyptians till the time of Amaſis. The ſame thing we are told concerning the Thracians, and the antient Scythians in general, and ſeveral other nations, many of which are mentioned by Porphyry in the account he gives of this matter, in his ſecond book De Abſtinentia (*x*). As to the Gauls, Germans, and Britons, that they were wont to appeaſe their gods with human ſacrifices, Tacitus

(*x*) Porphyr. Περὶ ἀποχῆς, lib. ii. ſect. 27. p. 71. et ibid. ſect. 34, 35, 36. p. 93, et ſeq. Edit. Cantabrig. 1655.

and

and Cæſar inform us (*y*). And Procopius ſays the ſame thing of the antient Heruli (*z*). And though this cruel rite was never ſo common among the Greeks and Romans, as among ſome other nations, yet it continued for a long time to be in uſe among them upon extraordinary occaſions. Porphyry mentions ſeveral of the Greek iſlands, in which human ſacrifices were offered at certain ſeaſons and ſolemnities; as in Chios, Tenedos, Salamis, Rhodes, and Crete. Among thoſe who ſometimes offered human ſacrifices he alſo takes notice of the Lacedæmonians and Athenians; and obſerves from Phylarchus, that the Grecians were wont to ſacrifice men when they went to war (*a*). Clemens Alexandrinus, in his admonition to the Gentiles, ſhews, from good authorities, that the ſame cuſtom obtained among the Theſſalians, Meſſenians, Phocæans, and Leſbians. And that Erechtheus, king of Athens, and the famous Roman general Marius, ſacrificed

(*y*) Tacit. Annal. 14. cap. 3. et de Moribus German. p. 542. Edit. Amſtel. 1661. Cæſar de Bel. Gall. lib. vi. cap. 21.

(*z*) Procop. De Bel. Goth. lib. vi. cap. 11. By the accounts antient writers give us, this cuſtom ſpread through Europe, Aſia, and Africa. The ſame may be obſerved concerning America, which was not known in their time. Acoſta, an author of credit, tells us, that the Americans were poſſeſſed with the fury of offering human ſacrifices to an incredible degree. All agree, that this was a common practice among the Mexicans. Gemelli Carreri, a late ingenious traveller, in his account of Mexico, inſiſts largely upon this ſubject: and what he ſaith of the number of human ſacrifices that were there offered, eſpecially on ſome extraordinary occaſions, is aſtoniſhing. Acoſta tells us of numbers of children that were ſacrificed in Peru, at the coronation of the Incas, and other ſpecial occaſions. Hiſt. Ind. lib. v. cap. 19. This however is contradicted by Garcilaſſo de la Vega, in his Royal Commentaries of Peru; who, though he acknowledges that the Mexicans and other neighbouring nations offered human ſacrifices, ſays, the Incas would not ſuffer them in their territories.

(*a*) Porphyr. ubi ſupra.

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their own daughters. Plutarch, in his life of Themiſtocles, informs us, that three very beautiful Perſian captives, richly habited and adorned, were, by the advice of the prophet Euphrantides, offered as ſacrifices to Bacchus Omeſtes, or the devourer, as a vow for victory: and though Themiſtocles was ſtartled at the inhumanity of it, the people with one voice invoking Bacchus, and bringing the captives to the altar, compelled him to perform the ſacrifice. The ſame great hiſtorian and philoſopher, in his life of Marcellus, tells us, that the Romans in the beginning of a war with the Gauls, in obedience to ſome oracles contained in the Sibylline books, buried alive a Greek man and a Greek woman, and likewiſe a Gauliſh man and a Gauliſh woman, in the Ox-market, by way of ſacrifice. Livy acquaints us, that they repeated this ſacrifice at the beginning of the ſecond Punick war (*b*). And Plutarch adds, that they continued to offer thoſe ſacrifices in his time (*c*). We are told by Florus, that when Rome was taken by the Gauls, thoſe of the Romans that were advanced in years, and had been honoured with the greateſt dignities, gathered together into the Forum, and there being devoted by the pontiff, conſecrated themſelves to the dii manes, the infernal gods. "Majores natu, ampliſſimis uſi honoribus, in Forum coierunt, "ibique devovente pontifice, diis ſe manibus conſecrayerunt (*d*)." Human ſacrifices were ſtill offered, as Porphyry informs us, till the time of the emperor Adrian, who ordered them in moſt

(*b*) Liv. Hiſt. lib. xxii. cap. 57.

(*c*) Plut. in vita Marcelli, oper. tom. i. p. 299. See alſo his Roman Queſtions, Queſt. 83.

(*d*) Luc. Flor. lib. i. cap. 13.

places

places to be aboliſhed. And then, as Euſebius obſerves, the Goſpel had every where diffuſed its ſalutary light. The beſt of the philoſophers had condemned it before, but had not been able to extirpate it. And even after this there were ſtill ſome inſtances of it in the Roman empire, as long as the Pagan religion prevailed. The ſame Porphyry, who lived in the reign of the emperor Diocleſian, mentions it as a thing well known, that in his days, in the city of Rome itſelf, a man was wont to be ſacrificed at the feaſt of Jupiter Latiaris. " Ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν τὶς ἀγνοεῖ κατὰ " τὴν μεγάλην πόλιν τῇ τοῦ Λατιαρίου Διὸς ἑορτῇ σφαζόμενον ἄνθρω- " πον (*e*)." Lactantius, who writ a little after Porphyry, ſays the ſame thing was done in his days. " Jupiter etiam nunc ſanguine " colitur humano (*f*)." This then may be juſtly regarded as making a part of the Pagan religion. Even in thoſe places where it was not ordinarily uſed, yet on extraordinary occaſions it made a principal part of the ſolemn ſacrifices paid to their deities, and was looked upon as the moſt effectual way of appeaſing them, and procuring their favour. Lord Herbert obſerves, " that their " cruel prieſts taught them, that victims of leſs dignity might be " ſufficient for inferior deities, but to their higheſt god the ſun, " theſe as the moſt valuable ſacrifices were to be offered.—Sacri- " ficandi ritus hic fuit, ut homo in ſolis honorem mactaretur; " licet enim minores victimæ aliis diis offerrentur, ſummo tamen " eorum deo ſummam convenire victimam docuerunt atrociſſimi " ſacerdotes (*g*)." But it ought to be mentioned to the honour of

(*e*) Porphyr. ubi ſupra.

(*f*) Divin. Inſtit. lib. i. cap. 21. p. 113.

(*g*) Herbert De Relig. Gentil. cap. 4. p. 31. Edit. 8vo. Amſtel.

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the law of Moſes, that at the time when this kind of ſacrifices very generally obtained in all the neighbouring nations, they were expreſly forbidden in that law, and repreſented as abominable in the ſight of God. And wherever Chriſtianity has been eſtabliſhed, thoſe ſacrifices have been aboliſhed.

There were alſo other rites made uſe of among the Pagans, which were cruel and ſhocking to humanity. Baal's prieſts were wont to cut and ſlaſh themſelves with knives and lances. 1 Kings xviii. 28. The ſame thing was practiſed in the worſhip of Iſis, according to Herodotus, and of Bellona, as Lampridius informs us; to which alſo Lucan refers, Pharſal. lib. i. verſ. 56, 57. In the omophagia, one of the feſtivals of Bacchus, his prieſts uſed to tear and devour the entrails of goats, raw and reeking, in imitation of their god (*b*). Many authors take notice of the ſolemnities of Cybele, the mother of the gods, whoſe prieſts not only emaſculated themſelves, but in their ſacred proceſſions made hideous noiſes and howlings, cutting themſelves till the blood guſhed out as they went along. Theſe frantic and cruel rites are well expoſed by Seneca in a paſſage quoted by St. Auſtin, from his book De Superſtitione, mentioned above (*i*). Yet the worſhip of

(*b*) Potter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. i. p. 348 et 407. Arnobius upbraids the Pagans with this ſavage rite. "Bacchanalia prætermittamus immania, quibus "nomen omophagiis Græcum eſt, in quibus, furore mentito, et ſequeſtratâ pec-"toris ſanitate, circumplicatis vos anguibus, atque ut vos plenes dei numine ac "majeſtate doceatis, caprorum reclamantium viſcera cruentatis oribus diſſipatis." Arnob. adverſ. Gent. lib. v. p. 169. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1651.

(*i*) De Civ. Dei, lib. vi, cap. 10. p. 123.

this goddeſs made a part of the public religion at Rome. Her ſtatue was brought by order of the ſenate, with great pomp, from Peſſinum in Galatia to Rome, purſuant to the advice of the Sibylline oracles, as Livy informs us (*k*), and the Ludi Megalenſes were inſtituted to her honour.

Among the cruel rites made uſe of in the worſhip of the Pagan deities may be alſo reckoned the διαμαστίγωσις, which was obſerved at Sparta, in honour of Diana Orthia, and was ſo called from the ſcourging there uſed. They whipped boys with an unrelenting ſeverity upon her altar, whilſt the prieſteſs of Diana ſtood by to ſee that it was rigorouſly executed. The boys often died under it, and in that caſe, when they bore it with a manly fortitude, they were honoured with a public funeral, and were buried with garlands on their heads, and, as Lucian ſays, they had ſtatues erected to their honour (*l*). This cuſtom is ſaid to have had its riſe in conſequence of an oracle, which ordered that the altar of the goddeſs ſhould be ſprinkled with blood. Accordingly they offered every year in ſacrifice a man choſen for that purpoſe. This was changed by Lycurgus into the whipping of boys at her altar. But when the boys were whipped to death, it was the moſt cruel way of ſacrificing them: of which Plutarch, in his life of Lycurgus, declares he had ſeen ſeveral inſtances. Dacier, in his notes on Plutarch's life of Themiſtocles, obſerves, that in one of the towns of Arcadia they uſed to whip the women, as

(*k*) Liv. Hiſt. lib. xxix. cap. 14.

(*l*) Potter's Greek Antiq. vol. i. p. 344. Lucian Oper. tom. ii. p. 297. Edit. Amſtel.

they

they did the young men or boys, round Diana's altar at Sparta. And Potter in his Greek Antiquities ſays, that Bacchus had an altar in Arcadia, upon which a great many young damſels were beaten to death with rods (*m*).

And as ſome of the Heathen rites were cruel and inhuman, others were no leſs remarkable for all manner of licentiouſneſs. In the feſtivals of Bacchus, which were celebrated all over Greece, but with a peculiar ſolemnity at Athens, the ſeat of learning and politeneſs, perſons of both ſexes ran about in the night as well as day in ridiculous poſtures, invoking the deity with loud cries and yellings, and putting on an appearance of fury and madneſs. And revelling and drunkenneſs was part of the worſhip to which they were obliged in honour of the god. The victors in their drinking conteſts on this occaſion were rewarded with a crown of leaves and a veſſel of wine (*n*). It was a ſaying of Plato, recorded by Diogenes Laertius, that to drink to exceſs was not allowable, except upon the feſtival of that god who is the giver of wine (*o*). The licentiouſneſs of theſe and ſome other feſtivals was ſo well known, that it was the advice of wiſe men to married women to abſtain from the feaſts of Bacchus and Ceres, and the mother of the gods. Hence that ſaying of Ariſtippus, mentioned by Sextus Empiricus, concerning a chaſte woman, "that ſhe will

(*m*) Potter ubi ſupra, p. 193.

(*n*) Ibid. p. 331. 348, 349. 407.

(*o*) Diog. Laert. lib. iii. ſegm. 39.

" not be corrupted even at the Bacchanals;" intimating the great danger women were in of being vitiated at thoſe feſtivals (*p*).

This leads me to obſerve, that many of their rites were indecent and impure. The Lupercalia, one of the moſt antient Roman feſtivals in honour of Pan, were celebrated in an immodeſt manner, the prieſts running about the ſtreets, naked all but the middle, and ſtriking all they met, eſpecially the women, with thongs made of the ſkins of goats which they had ſacrificed (*q*). The Ludi Florales were alſo a part of the public Roman religion, celebrated by the direction of the Sibylline oracles, in honour of the goddeſs Flora, and were appointed by the authority of the ſtate. The chief part of the ſolemnity was managed by a company of ſhameleſs ſtrumpets, who ran up and down naked, ſometimes dancing in laſcivious poſtures, ſometimes fighting, and acting the mimics: which was not diſcountenanced, but rather encouraged by the graveſt magiſtrates (*r*). The rites of the goddeſs Cybele were no leſs infamous for lewdneſs than for cruelty. And the Kotyttia or Kotytis, a nocturnal feſtival, in honour of Kotys or Kotytis, the goddeſs of wantonneſs, was obſerved by the Athenians, Corinthians, Chians, Thracians, and others, and celebrated with rites ſuitable to ſuch a goddeſs, who was thought to be delighted with nothing ſo much as lewdneſs and debauchery: and the prieſts practiſed all ſorts of

(*p*) Pyrrhon. Hypotyp. lib. iii. cap. 24.

(*q*) See Kennet's Roman Antiquities, p. 64, 65.

(*r*) Ibid. p. 288, 289.

effeminacy

effeminacy and meretricious arts (*s*). The Aphrodiſia, or feſtivals in honour of Venus, were obſerved with laſcivious ceremonies in divers parts of Greece. At Corinth theſe feſtivals were celebrated by harlots, as we learn from Athenæus; who alſo informs us, that they who ſupplicated the goddeſs, were wont to promiſe to devote ſome women to her, in order to the obtaining their requeſts (*t*). Strabo, a grave and judicious writer, relates, that there was a temple of Venus at Corinth ſo rich, that it maintained above a thouſand harlots, ſacred to her ſervice, ἱεροδούλους ἑταίρας, which were conſecrated both by men and women to that goddeſs (*u*). The ſame author, ſpeaking of Comana, a city of Cappadocia, ſaith, that there were many women there, who proſtituted their bodies for hire, moſt of them ſacred, πλείσται ἱεραί, and that there as well as at Corinth, becauſe of the multitude of harlots conſecrated to Venus, there was a great reſort of people to ſojourn and keep feſtivals in that place (*x*). The truth is, theſe impure cuſtoms were ſpread far and wide. Herodotus acquaints us, that there was a law among the Babylonians, that every woman who was a native of that country ſhould once in her life go to the temple of Venus, to proſtitute herſelf to a ſtranger; that there were many women ſitting at the temple for that purpoſe; and that the money which was given them, and which it was not

(*s*) Potter's Greek Antiq. ubi ſupra, p. 375, 376.

(*t*) Ibid. p. 337. Athen. Deipnoſoph. lib. xiii. cap. 6.

(*u*) Strabo, lib. viii. p. 581. Edit. Amſtel. 1707.

(*x*) Ibid. lib. xii. p. 837.

lawful

lawful for them to refuſe, was dedicated to ſacred uſes (*y*). This cuſtom, as a learned and ingenious author has obſerved, is not to be charged upon any peculiar wantonneſs of the women of that country. It was done as an act of religion, and a duty required of them towards that goddeſs; which, when they had once diſcharged, nothing, as Herodotus farther informs us, could prevail with them to reiterate it (*z*). Strabo alſo mentions this law and cuſtom, to which, he ſays, they were directed by a certain oracle, and that the women which came to the temple for that purpoſe, were wont to come with great pomp, and attended with much company (*a*). The ſame much-eſteemed author aſſures us concerning the Armenians, that they principally worſhipped the goddeſs Anaïtis, and that the moſt illuſtrious perſons of the nation dedicated their virgin daughters to her, which after having been for a long time proſtituted in her ſervice, were given in marriage, none diſdaining to marry them, but rather thinking it an honour to do ſo. And he there alſo mentions Herodotus as ſaying the ſame thing of the Lydian women (*b*). Other inſtances of the like kind might be mentioned: as what Lucian tells us of a great temple of Venus at Byblus in Syria, at which the women proſtituted themſelves for hire on a certain day to ſtrangers only, and that the gain they got by it was a ſacrifice to Venus (*c*). See alſo

(*y*) Herod. lib. i. n. 199. Edit. Francof. 1608.

(*z*) De l'Origin des Loix, &c. tom. iii. p. 331, et ſeq.

(*a*) Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 1081.

(*b*) Ibid. lib. xi. p. 805.

(*c*) Lucian. Oper. vol. ii. p. 658. Edit. Amſt. 1687.

what

what Valerius Maximus reports to the ſame purpoſe concerning the temple of Venus at Sicca in Africa (*d*). The teſtimonies which have been produced are not to be ſuſpected, as they are taken from celebrated Heathen writers: from whom alſo it appears, that the moſt abominable impurities and crimes againſt nature, made, in many places, a part of their religion. Of this kind is what Strabo relates concerning the filthineſs committed with the ſacred goats at Mendes in Egypt, where Pan was worſhipped: an inſtance of which is mentioned by Herodotus, who ſays, it was done publicly and openly when he was in Egypt (*e*). Nor have we any reaſon to doubt of the truth of what Julius Firmicus relates concerning the ſodomy practiſed in his time in ſome of their temples, particularly thoſe of Juno; which, he ſays, they were ſo far from being aſhamed of, that they made it the ſubject of their glorying (*f*). The learned Dr. Spenſer has ſhewn, that among the antient Pagan idolaters there were males as well as females conſecrated to their deities, who proſtituted themſelves in their temples on the ſacred feſtivals, and were thought by doing ſo to yield them acceptable ſervice; and that they were wont to dedicate the gains of their proſtitution to their gods and goddeſſes (*g*).

(*d*) Val. Max. lib. ii. cap. vi. n. 15.

(*e*) Herod. lib. ii. n. 46. Strabo, lib. xvii. p. 1154.

(*f*) "Videre eſt in ipſis templis, cum publico gemitu miſeranda ludibria, viros "muliebria pati, et hanc impuri et impudici corporis labem glorioſâ oſtentatione "detegere. Publicant facinora ſua, et contaminati corporis vitium cum maximâ "delectationis macula confitentur." De Errore profan. Religion. p. 10, 11. Oxon. 1678.

(*g*) Spenſer De Leg. Hebr. lib. ii. cap. 22 et 23.

Euſebius obſerves, that the Heathens came at length to that height of wickedneſs and impurity, that, through an exceſs of luſtful intemperance, they worſhipped with divine honour thoſe parts of the body which are the inſtruments of exciting and gratifying the moſt impure paſſions (*h*). The figures of them were carried about in ſome of their ſacred proceſſions, to which hymns were ſung, and religious veneration paid. This was done among the Egyptians in the Sacra of Iſis and Oſiris, and, as Diodorus affirms, in the ſolemnities of other nations, particularly among the Greeks. For a proof of this I would refer to the account given by Potter, in his Grecian Antiquities, of the Aphrodiſia or feſtival of Venus celebrated at Cyprus, of the Dionyſia or feſtival of Bacchus at Athens, and of the Theſmophoria or feſtival in honour of Ceres at Syracuſe (*i*).

(*h*) Præpar. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 6. p. 74.

(*i*) Potter's Antiquities, vol. i. p. 337. 347, 348. 369. Concerning the obſcenities in their ſacred rites and ceremonies, Arnobius, who had been a learned Pagan, treats largely. Adverſ. Gent. lib. v. p. 168, 169, et ſeq. Edit. varior. Lugd. Bat. 1651. To which may be added what Clem. Alex. relates concerning the ſacred cheſt or coffer of Bacchus, and its impure contents, which were propoſed to veneration. Clem. Alex. Protrept. p. 16. Edit. Potter. See alſo what St. Auſtin ſays from Varro, "De turpitudine ſacrorum quæ Libero celebrantur. In Italiæ compitis "quædam dicit [Varro] ſacra Liberi celebrata cum tantâ licentiâ turpitudinis, ut "in ejus honorem, pudenda virilia colerentur. Nam hoc turpe membrum, per "Liberi dies feſtos cum honore magno ploſtellis impoſitum, prius rure in compitis, "et uſque in urbem poſtea vectabatur. In oppido autem Lavinio uni Libero totus "menſis tribuebatur, cujus diebus omnes verbis flagitioſiſſimis uterentur, donec "illud membrum per forum tranſvectum eſſet, atque in loco ſuo quieſcerit. Cui "membro in honeſto matrem familias honeſtiſſimam palàm coronam neceſſe "erat imponere." Apud Auguſtin. De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 21. p. 136. Edit. Bened.

It

It has given me ſome uneaſineſs to go through a detail, which can ſcarce be mentioned without ſhocking the delicacy of a modeſt reader. But it may be of uſe to let us ſee what extravagancies and abominations men are capable of, when they have loſt and perverted the true knowledge of God, and of his worſhip. Nothing can give us a more affecting view of the corrupt ſtate of religion in the Heathen world, even among the moſt civilized nations. The Pagan idolatry was not a mere ſpeculative abſurdity, but had in many inſtances a very pernicious influence on the morals of the people, encouraging all manner of debauchery and licentiouſneſs. There are ſeveral paſſages in the Old Teſtament in which it is intimated, that impurity was an uſual attendant of the Heathen idolatry. And ſo it alſo was when the Goſpel was firſt publiſhed to the world. It is a juſt account which St. Peter gives of the Gentiles in his time, that they "walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, "exceſs of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idola-"tries:" and they thought it "ſtrange, that the Chriſtians did "not run with them into the ſame exceſs of riot, ſpeaking evil "of them." 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. And St. Paul, having made a lively repreſentation of the inexcuſable idolatry into which the Gentile world was generally fallen, obſerves, that as a juſt judgment upon them, "God gave them up to uncleanneſs, through the luſts of "their own hearts, to diſhonour their own bodies between them-"ſelves." Rom. i. 24. And elſewhere he ſaith of them, that "being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance "that was in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts, they "gave themſelves over unto laſciviouſneſs, to commit all uncleanneſs with greedineſs." Eph. iv. 18, 19. This followed from

their very religion, and the notions they generally entertained of the gods they worſhipped. The celebrated Mr. De Voltaire is pleaſed to tell us, that " the religion of the Pagans conſiſted in " nothing but morality and feſtivals; morality, which is common " to men of all ages and places; and feſtivals, which were no " more than times of rejoicing, and could not be of prejudice to " mankind (*k*)." That the Heathen morality was very defective will appear when I come more particularly to conſider it. Nor was morality properly a part of their religion, as taught by the prieſts. It is a juſt obſervation of Mr. Locke, that " the people, " under pain of diſpleaſing the gods, were to frequent the temples: " every one went to their ſacrifices and ſervices: but the prieſts " made it not their buſineſs to teach them virtue (*l*)." As to the Pagan feſtivals, it ſufficiently appears from the account which hath been given of them, that they were far from being ſo innocent as Mr. De Voltaire repreſents them. Both the deities they adored, and the rites of their worſhip, had a tendency in many inſtances to corrupt their morals.

Another ingenious author, who has ſhewn a very ſtrong prejudice in favour of the Pagan religion and worſhip, has thought fit to obſerve, that " if we compare the abominations committed at " the feaſts of Venus and Bacchus, with the debaucheries which

(*k*) " La religion des Payens ne conſiſtoit que dans la morale, et dans les fetes: " la morale, qui eſt commune aux hommes de tous les tems et de tous les lieux; " et les fetes, qüi n'etoient que de rejouiſſances, et ne pourvoient troubler le genre " humain." Hiſt. du Siecle de Louis XIV.

(*l*) Locke's Reaſon. of Chriſt. in his Works, vol. ii. p. 532. 3d Edit.

" happen

" happen upon the great feſtivals of the Chriſtian church, we " ſhall find that men of all religions are much the ſame. But " muſt we look upon theſe abuſes as principles of the primitive " Pagan or Chriſtian religion (*m*)?" But there is this remarkable difference between them: that what he calls the abuſes of the Heathen feſtivals, naturally aroſe from the notions they formed of their deities, and made a neceſſary part of the worſhip paid to them. The whores conſecrated to Venus, and the impure rites practiſed at her feſtivals, and the drunkenneſſes and other vicious exceſſes at the feaſts of Bacchus, were ſuppoſed to be agreeable to the temper and character of thoſe deities, and to be acceptable and honourable to them. And as ſuch were countenanced, and in many inſtances preſcribed both by their oracles and by their laws. And indeed what other rites could be imagined becoming ſuch a laſcivious goddeſs as Venus, and ſuch a drunken deity as Bacchus was repreſented to be; or ſuited to the flagitious actions aſcribed to others of their gods, and even to Jupiter the chief of them? But none can pretend, that the revellings and debaucheries committed at ſome of the Chriſtian feſtivals, make a part of the worſhip preſcribed or countenanced by the Chriſtian religion.

Moſt of the Heathen feſtivals and ſolemnities, and the rites, games, and proceſſions celebrated in honour of their deities, were, as hath been already hinted, founded on the poetical or fabulous theology, and on the traditions of the mythologiſts. And theſe

(*m*) Chevalier Ramſay's Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, vol. ii. p. 401, 402.

rites and ſolemnities made a part of the public religion: they were authorized by the laws, and celebrated, as Potter obſerves, at a vaſt charge (*n*). The Athenians were particularly remarkable for this; who, as they exceeded other people in the number of the gods they adored, ſo they had, according to Xenophon in his account of the Athenian republic, twice as many feſtivals as any other cities.

It is not to be doubted, that ſome of the beſt and wiſeſt among the Pagans diſapproved theſe ſcandalous exceſſes. But as they naturally ſprung up out of their religion, no effectual remedy could be applied, whilſt the public idolatry and worſhip of the popular deities continued in force. And this even the philoſophers confirmed, by urging it upon every man as his duty to conform to the religion, and to worſhip the gods of his country. As to the magiſtrates and great men of the ſtate, it does not appear that they had any deſire or intention, that the people ſhould have ſuch juſt notions of religion, as might be a proper preſervative to them againſt thoſe idolatrous ſuperſtitions. Nor did they give themſelves any concern about them; except in caſes where they thought the intereſt of the public required them to interpoſe; of which we have a famous inſtance in the horrid and ſhocking enormities occaſioned by the introducing the Bacchanalia into Italy; which were carried ſo far, and produced ſuch unlawful combinations, as threatened the ſubverſion of the ſtate. Great numbers were therefore put to death, by order of the ſenate, for

(*n*) Potter's Greek Antiq. vol. i. p. 325.

being

being initiated in thoſe myſteries: of which Livy gives a particular account in the 39th book of his Hiſtory.

The Roman pontiff Scævola before mentioned, whom Cicero in his firſt book De Oratore calls, "juriſperitorum eloquentiſ-"ſimus, et eloquentium juriſperitiſſimus," though he finds great fault with the poetical theology concerning the gods, yet was in reality far from deſiring that the people ſhould be rightly inſtructed in the true nature of religion. For among the things which it was not proper or profitable for the people to know he reckons the following, viz. that "Hercules and Æſculapius, Caſtor and "Pollux, are not gods: for it is delivered by the learned, that "they were men, and deceaſed according to the common lot of "humanity: that the cities have not the true images or repre-"ſentations of thoſe that are gods: and that a true God has nei-"ther ſex nor age, nor diſtinct bodily members.—Non eſſe deos "Herculem, Æſculapium, Caſtorem, Pollucem: traditur enim "a doctis quod homines fuerint, et humanâ conditione defece-"rint: eorum qui ſint dii non habere civitates vera ſimulacra: "quod verus Deus nec ſexum habeat nec ætatem, nec definita "corporis membra (*o*)."

Varro was very ſenſible, that their religion and worſhip needed to be reformed. He ſticks not to declare, that, if he had been to new model the city, he would have endeavoured to make the names and worſhip of their gods more conformable to truth and nature: but that, as it had been of a long ſtanding among the

(*o*) Apud Auguſtin. De Civit. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 27. p. 84.

people, he thought he ought to retain the names and hiſtory of the gods as received from the antients, and to treat of them in ſuch a manner, as ſhould rather engage the common people to worſhip them with greater veneration, than expoſe them to contempt (*p*). And accordingly he ſeems to value himſelf upon it, as having well merited of his fellow-citizens, in that he not only gave an account of the gods whom the Romans ought to worſhip, but what power and office belonged to each of them, that the people might not be at a loſs whom to addreſs on any particular occaſion. "Ita eſſe utilem cognitionem deorum, ſi ſciatur quam quiſque "deus vim et facultatem ac poteſtatem cujuſque rei habeat: ex "eo enim poterimus ſcire quem cujuſque rei cauſa deum advocare "atque invocare debeamus (*q*)." The ſame great man ſays, "It is uſeful to the commonwealth, that men of courage and "fortitude ſhould think that they were begotten of the gods, al- "though it be falſe; that ſo looking upon themſelves to be of "divine extraction, they may with the greater boldneſs and con- "fidence attempt and accompliſh the greateſt things.—Utile eſſe "civitatibus dicit, ut ſe viri fortes, etiamſi falſum ſit, diis genitos "eſſe credent, ut eo modo humanus animus velut divinæ ſtirpis "fiduciam gerens, res magnas aggrediendas præſumat audacius, "et agat vehementius (*r*)". And indeed this is agreeable to the rule he lays down, when ſpeaking of religion and the ſacred rites, that many things are true which it is of no advantage to the people

(*p*) Apud Auguſtin. ubi ſupra, cap. 31. p. 87.

(*q*) Ibid. cap. 22. p. 81.

(*r*) Ibid. cap. 3. p. 49.

to

to know, and that even though they be falſe it is expedient that the people ſhould think otherwiſe. " Multa eſſe vera quæ non " modo vulgo ſcire non ſit utile, ſed etiam tametſi falſa ſunt, ali- " ter exiſtimare populum expediat (*s*)." It can ſcarce be doubted, but that ſome of the great and learned men among them were ſenſible of the falſhood and abſurdity of the public and popular religion. This ſeems particularly to have been the caſe of that eminent philoſopher and ſtateſman Cicero, Varro's friend and intimate. He makes very free with the Pagan gods, and their worſhip, in ſeveral parts of his works. But though he thought theſe things might be treated of in the philoſophical diſputations, he was not for having them brought before the people, leſt it ſhould tend to the ſubverſion of the public religion. " Non eſſe " illa vulgò diſputanda, ne ſuſceptas publicè religiones diſputatio " talis extinguat." This paſſage is cited by Lactantius (*t*), and was taken, as Davies thinks, from Cicero's third book De Nat. Deorum, though not now to be found there, as ſeveral parts of that book are loſt.

Such were the maxims by which the wiſeſt and greateſt men of the Pagan world governed themſelves, which ſhews how little was to be expected from them for leading the people into the right knowledge and practice of religion. Indeed their legiſlators and great men were principally concerned in countenancing and eſtabliſhing the public idolatry and polytheiſm, and

(*s*) Apud Auguſtin. ubi ſupra, lib. iv. cap. 31. p. 87.

(*t*) Divin. Inſtit. lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 148. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

would

would not ſuffer any infringement of the legal appointed rites and worſhip. They conſidered religion in a political view, and were not for curing or removing the popular ſuperſtition, but rather for making uſe of it in ſuch a manner as might beſt anſwer the ends of the civil power.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Pagan myſteries have been highly extolled, as an expedient provided by the civil authority, both for leading the people to the practice of virtue, and for convincing them of the vanity of the common idolatry and polytheiſm. The tendency of the myſteries to purify the ſoul, and raiſe men to the perfection of virtue, examined. At beſt they were only deſigned to promote the practice of thoſe virtues which were moſt uſeful to ſociety, and to deter men from ſuch vices as were moſt pernicious to it. In proceſs of time they became greatly corrupted, and had a bad effect on the morals of the people. The pretence, that the myſteries were intended to detect the error of the vulgar polytheiſm, and to bring men to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, diſtinctly conſidered: and the proofs brought for it ſhewn to be inſufficient.

I Know of nothing which can be alledged, as deſigned and appointed by the ſtate, for rectifying the popular notions of religion, except what was done this way in the celebration of the ſacred myſteries. And this indeed was very conſiderable, and muſt have had a great effect, if the account given of the nature and deſign of thoſe myſteries by the very learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes, the preſent Biſhop of Glouceſter, may be depended upon. The deſign of them was, as he repreſents it, both to engage men to a holy and virtuous practice, and to give

them juſt notions of religion, and detect the error of the vulgar polytheiſm. He ſays, that in the myſteries, " thoſe that were " initiated were obliged by ſolemn engagements to commence a " new life of the ſtricteſt purity and virtue: nor was a leſs degree " of purity required of the initiated for their future conduct (*a*)." That " the myſteries openly proclaimed it, as their chief buſineſs " to reſtore the ſoul to its original purity (*b*)." And that " they " profeſſed to exact nothing difficult of the initiated which they " would not aſſiſt him to perform (*c*)." And having repreſented it as an inſtitution, " which taught the neceſſity of a ſtrict and " holy life;" he makes this an argument, that " it could not " come out of the ſacerdotal warehouſe; but muſt have been the " invention of legiſlators, to whoſe ſchemes virtue was neceſ- " ſary (*d*)." And whereas " the vicious examples of their gods " was one inſuperable obſtacle to a life of purity and holineſs, it " was neceſſary to remedy this evil, which they did by ſtriking at " the root of it. So that ſuch of the initiated as were judged ca- " pable were made acquainted with the whole deluſion. The " myſtagogue taught them, that Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars, " and the whole rabble of licentious deities, were only dead mor- " tals, ſubject in life to the ſame paſſions and vices with them- " ſelves; but having been on other accounts benefactors to man- " kind, grateful poſterity had deified them, and with their vir-

(*a*) Div. Leg. of Moſes, book ii. ſect. iv. p. 145. 4th Edit.

(*b*) Ibid. p. 142.

(*c*) Ibid. p. 154.

(*d*) Ibid. p. 208, 209.

" tues

" tues had indiſcretely canonized their vices. The fabulous gods " being thus routed, the Supreme Cauſe of all things naturally " took their place. Him they were taught to conſider as the " Creator of the univerſe, who pervaded all things by his virtue, " and governed all things by his providence (*e*)." He poſitively " aſſerts, that " the ἀπόῤῥητα, or ſecret doctrines of the myſteries, " overthrew the vulgar polytheiſm, or worſhip of dead men (*f*)." And again, that the " clear evidence of antiquity expreſly informs " us of theſe two particulars, That the errors of polytheiſm were " detected, and the doctrine of the unity taught and explained in " the myſteries (*g*)." And having obſerved, that it was the deſign of the myſteries to make men as virtuous as they could, he ſays, that " this they provided for by diſcovering, to ſuch as were " capable of the ſecret, the whole deluſion of polytheiſm;" and adds, that " this being ſuppoſed the ſhaking foundations, was to " be done with all poſſible circumſpection, and under the moſt " tremendous ſeal of ſecreſy. For they taught, the gods them- " ſelves puniſhed the revealers of the ſecret; and not them only, " but the hearers of it too. Nor did they altogether truſt to that " neither—the ſtate decreed capital puniſhments againſt the be- " trayers of the myſteries, and inflicted them with mercileſs " ſeverity (*h*)." And he concludes his account of the myſteries with obſerving, that " there were there things about which the

(*e*) Div. Leg. p. 154, 155.

(*f*) Ibid.

(*g*) Ibid. p. 157.

(*h*) Ibid. p. 180.

" miſteries were principally concerned. 1. The riſe and eſtabliſh-
" ment of civil ſociety. 2. The doctrine of a future ſtate of re-
" wards and puniſhments. 3. The error of polytheiſm, and the
" principle of the unity (*i*)."

Such is the idea our learned and ingenious author gives of the nature and deſign of the Pagan myſteries. Theſe, he tells us, were celebrated in almoſt all nations. He mentions Egypt, Perſia, Aſia, Thrace, Greece, particularly Argos, Bœotia, Athens, Crete, Cyprus, Samothrace, Amphyſſa, Lemnos; likewiſe Britain and India. He ſaith, the nature of all theſe myſteries was the ſame, that they were all derived from the ſame original, and conſtituted for the ſame ends (*k*). But that the Eleuſinian were the moſt renowned; and in proceſs of time eclipſed, and as it were ſwallowed up, the reſt. They ſpread through the Roman empire, and beyond the limits of it. Tully ſays, that the nations in the utmoſt borders of the earth were initiated into them. " Initiantur
" gentes orarum ultimæ." And Apuleius, that crowds were initiated, men and women, perſons of all ages, conditions, and dignities (*l*). So that if theſe myſteries were both ſo excellently deſigned and *ſucceſsfully employed* as he ſays they were, almoſt all nations throughout the world, by the contrivance of the legiſlators and civil magiſtrates, were provided with a noble expedient for raiſing them to the height of purity and virtue, and convincing them of the error of idolatry and polytheiſm.

(*i*) Div. Leg. p. 286.

(*k*) Ibid. p. 138. 160.

(*l*) Ibid. p. 140. 146.

It were to be wiſhed that ſo beautiful a ſcheme were founded on ſufficient proofs. For it muſt be acknowledged, that the account which is here given of the myſteries is highly ingenious and entertaining, and adorned with a variety of learning. It gives me uneaſineſs to be obliged to differ from an author eminent for his abilities and genius, as well as for his extenſive learning, and the ſtation he bears. But ſince he repreſents the myſteries as the *moſt ſacred part of the Pagan religion* (*m*), and as belonging to the civil theology of the Pagans, which we are now conſidering, the ſubject I am upon, and the regard I owe to what appears to me upon the moſt impartial enquiry to be the truth, obliges me to give reaſons why I cannot think this account of the Pagan myſteries to be a juſt one.

I need not enter upon a very particular examination of the tendency the myſteries had to engage men to the practice of the ſtricteſt purity and virtue. A few obſervations upon it may ſuffice. I readily acknowledge that the conductors of the myſteries made high pretenſions this way. In order to procure a greater veneration for them, the hierophant, or perſon who preſided in thoſe myſteries, was obliged to devote himſelf wholly to the divine ſervice, and to live a chaſte and ſingle life. To which purpoſe it was uſual for him to anoint himſelf with the juice of hemlock, which, by its extreme coldneſs, is ſaid to extinguiſh in a great meaſure the natural heat (*n*). With the ſame view it was that

(*m*) Div. Leg. p. 136.

(*n*) Potter's Greek Antiq. vol. i. p. 183. 356.

perſons

perſons known to be guilty of any atrocious crime were forbidden to be preſent at the myſteries. Theſe pretences were carried to a ſtill greater height after Chriſtianity made its appearance, and taught ſo pure and ſublime a morality. The moſt learned and zealous advocates for Paganiſm, as Apuleius, Iamblicus, Hierocles, Proclus, and others, cried up the myſteries as the moſt effectual means for purifying the ſoul, and raiſing it to communion with the gods (*o*). For this purpoſe many of the latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans got themſelves initiated into the ſeveral myſteries of the gods in different nations, and applied themſelves to what they called Theurgy; though, as St. Auſtin obſerves, Porphyry owned, that he had not after all his reſearches met with any ſatisfactory way of purging the ſoul (*p*). But I cannot think that the legiſlators, in inſtituting the myſteries, concerned themſelves much about reſtoring the ſoul to its original purity, in the Pythagorean or Platonic ſenſe; what they had in view by our learned author's own acknowledgment was, to ſecure and promote the cauſe of virtue, as far as was neceſſary for the ends of civil ſociety. As to any thing farther than this they were not ſollicitous. The myſteries ſeem to have been originally deſigned to tame and civilize the rude and barbarous people, to form and

(*o*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 144. The ſame learned author obſerves, that "if "we may believe a certain antient, who appears to be well verſed in theſe mat- "ters, the myſteries gained their end, by clearing up all doubts concerning the "righteous government of the gods." He refers to Sopater in Diviſ. Quæſt. See Div. Leg. vol. i. p. 210. I muſt confeſs, ſuch paſſages as theſe, inſtead of raiſing in me an higher opinion of the myſteries, make me very much ſuſpect the truth of the extravagant encomiums beſtowed upon them.

(*p*) Apud Auguſt. De Civ. Dei, lib. x. cap. 32. p. 204.

poliſh

poliſh their manners, and by ſhews and repreſentations, which were fitted to ſtrike the imagination, to bring them to a greater awe and veneration for the laws and religion of their country; which among the Pagans was always regarded as a neceſſary ingredient in a virtuous character. Diodorus informs us, that in the Sicilian feaſts of Ceres, which laſted ten days, was repreſented the antient manner of living before men had learned the uſe and culture of bread-corn (*q*). This ſeems to have been deſigned to make men ſenſible of the value of a civilized life. It may be gathered from what is ſaid by ſeveral of the antients, that the principal ſubject of the Eleuſinian myſteries was the life of Ceres, her wanderings after her daughter, and her legiſlation in Sicily and Africa, where ſhe taught the inhabitants agriculture, and gave them laws, and thereby reclaimed them from their rude and uncultivated manners. It is not improbable therefore, that occaſion was taken from thence to repreſent in the myſteries the great benefit of laws, and the happy conſequences of being brought from the wretchedneſs of a ſavage life, to humanity, civility, good manners, and politeneſs (*r*). And this is what Cicero ſeems

(*q*) Diod. p. 200. Edit. Steph. as cited Div. Leg. vol. i. p. 240. 2d Edit.

(*r*) Callimachus, in his hymn to Ceres, verſ. 10. celebrates her as having given laws to cities, and taught men to cut down the ears of corn. Agreeable to this Arnobius tells us, that the hiſtory of Ceres, and her teaching the people the uſe of corn, was the principal ſubject of the Eleuſinian myſteries. Adverſ. Gent. lib. v. p. 185. Edit. Var. Lugd. Bat. St. Auſtin gives the ſame account from Varro, De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 20. p. 136. And Claudian, in the beginning of his poem De Raptu Proſerpinæ, where he profeſſes to open the ſecrets of the myſteries, plainly ſuppoſes the deſign of them to be, to repreſent Proſerpine's being carried off by Pluto, Ceres's wandering after her daughter, her giving laws to the people where ſhe went, and teaching them the uſe of corn inſtead of acorns.

to

to have particularly in view in that noted paſſage on which our author lays a great ſtreſs. " Nam mihi cum multa divinaque vi-
" dentur Athenæ peperiſſe, atque in vitâ hominum attuliſſe, tum
" nihil melius iſtis myſteriis, quibus ex agreſti immanique vitâ,
" exculti ad humanitatem et mitigati ſumus: neque ſolùm cum
" lætitia vivendi rationem accepimus; ſed etiam cum ſpe meliore
" moriendi." De Legibus, lib. ii. cap. 14. Here he highly praiſes the myſteries, for that by them we were reclaimed from a rude and ſavage life, and cultivated and ſoftened into humanity: and that they are rightly called initia, the beginning, becauſe by them we have known, or became acquainted with the beginnings or firſt principles of life, [i. e. of a humane and civilized life: for of this he is evidently ſpeaking] and have been taught not only how to live pleaſantly, but to die with a better hope. This relates to what was ſo carefully inculcated in the myſteries, that " thoſe who were initiated not only lived in a ſtate of greater
" happineſs and ſecurity than other men, being under the imme-
" diate care and protection of the goddeſſes, but that after death
" they enjoyed far greater degrees of felicity than others, and
" were honoured with the firſt places in the Elyſian abodes:
" whereas others were forced to lie and wallow in perpetual dirt,
" ſtink, and naſtineſs (*s*)."

(*s*) Potter's Antiq. vol. i. p. 355. This gave occaſion to that ſneer of Diogenes the cynic, when the Athenians urged him to be initiated, becauſe thoſe that were initiated had higher places in Hades than other men; he anſwered, That it was a ridiculous thing to ſuppoſe, that Epaminondas and Ageſilaus ſhould lie in dirt and filthineſs, whilſt common men of no worth ſhould be placed in the iſlands of the bleſſed. Diog. Laert. lib. vi. ſegm. 39. Or, as Plutarch tells it, " Shall Patæcion
" the thief be in a better place after death than Epaminondas, becauſe he was ini-
" tiated?"

" The

The true meaning of that paſſage in Cicero, which has been now mentioned, farther appears by comparing it with a parallel paſſage at the end of his fifth book againſt Verres, cap. 72. " Teque Ceres et Libera, quarum ſacra, ſicut opiniones homi-" num et religiones ferunt, longè maximis atque occultiſſimis " cæremoniis continentur, a quibus initia vitæ atque victûs, " legum, morum, manſuetudinis, humanitatis exempla, homi-" nibus ac civitatibus data ac diſpertita eſſe dicuntur: quorum " ſacra populus Romanus a Græcis accepta et aſcita, tantâ reli-" gione et publicè et privatim tuetur." Here, after having obſerved, that the ſacra or holy rites of Ceres and Libera were contained in the moſt auguſt and hidden ceremonies, he ſaith, that from thence the beginnings of life and of a proper diet, the examples of laws, manners, mildneſs, humanity, are ſaid to have been given and imparted to men and cities. I ſhall here inſert a note of the learned Adrian Turnebus relating to this matter. " Initia vocantur ab initiis vitæ, inventis a Cerere legibus et fru-" gibus, in quarum rerum memoriam fiebant, cum antea ferino " ritu homines ſibi vitam propagabant.—That the myſteries were " called initia, the beginnings, becauſe they were inſtituted in me-" mory of Ceres's having given men laws, and taught them the " uſe of corn, whereby they began properly to live the life of men, " whereas before they lived after the manner of wild beaſts (*t*)."

In the repreſentations made in the myſteries of future rewards and puniſhments, matters were ſo contrived, that the vir-

(*t*) Turneb. Commentar. in Cicer. de Leg. lib. ii. ſ. 9. p. 338. Edit. Davies.

tues rewarded and vices puniſhed were ſuch as more immediately affected ſociety; as our learned author has obſerved. And it is not improbable that theſe repreſentations and ſhows, where a due care was taken to guard them againſt the abuſes to which they were liable, might produce ſome good effects for the advantage of ſociety, which is what the legiſlators and civil magiſtrates had principally in view. And yet ſome eminent Pagans ſeem not to have entertained very advantageous thoughts of the myſteries with regard to their moral tendency. If Socrates had looked upon them as having a friendly influence on religion and virtue, he who had its intereſts ſo much at heart, would not have declined being initiated; eſpecially ſince he knew that by this he expoſed himſelf to the calumnies of his enemies, and incurred the popular ſuſpicion of being an irreligious and prophane perſon. It is true, that Socrates is introduced by Plato in his Phædo as giving a favourable interpretation of the deſign and intention of thoſe myſteries: and indeed the extraordinary veneration they were had in among the people at Athens, as well as their being ſtrongly ſupported by the civil magiſtrates and by the laws, would have made it very unſafe for him to have ſaid the leaſt thing to their diſparagement. But his neglecting to be initiated is a much ſtronger proof that he had not a very good opinion of them, than any thing which can be produced to the contrary (*u*).

What-

(*u*) Socrates, in Plato's Phædo, ſays, concerning thoſe who inſtituted and appointed the myſteries, that they were no mean or contemptible perſons, ὦ φαῦλοι τίνες, and that they taught, that "whoſoever went to Hades without being expiated "or initiated would lie in the dirt or filthineſs, but that thoſe who went thither "purged and initiated would dwell with the gods." Plat. Oper. p. 380. F. Edit. Lugd. 1590. The purification here referred to ſeems to have been the ritual puri-

fication

Whatever we ſuppoſe to have been the original intention of thoſe myſteries, and allowing all that can be juſtly ſaid in favour of them, there is, I think, great reaſon to apprehend that upon the whole they proved rather detrimental than advantageous to the cauſe of virtue. Our learned author himſelf acknowledges, "that "in Greece itſelf the myſteries became abominably abuſed: a "proof of which we have in the conduct of their comic writers, "who frequently lay the ſcene of their ſubject, ſuch as the rape "of a young girl, and the like, at the celebration of the myſte-"ries; as he ſhews from Fabricius." And he obſerves, that "in "Cicero's time the terms myſteries and abomination were almoſt "ſynonymous (*x*)." It is true, that the beſt inſtitutions may be corrupted; but the fault ſeems here to have been owing to a fundamental defect in the original conſtitution of them. "We "can aſſign no ſurer cauſe," ſaith this eminent writer, "of the "horrid abuſes and corruptions of the myſteries, than the *ſeaſon* "in which they were repreſented, and the profound ſilence in "which they were buried. Night gave opportunity to wicked "men to attempt evil actions, and the ſecrecy encouragment to "repeat them (*y*)." He farther obſerves, that "the myſteries "were ſometimes" [he might have ſaid they were frequently]

fication preſcribed in the myſteries: concerning which ſee Potter's Antiq. vol. i. p. 355. But Socrates, who was for taking advantage of this, intimates, that it had probably a hidden meaning, and was deſigned to ſignify, that it was neceſſary that the ſoul ſhould be purified by virtue. He does not ſay, that this was declared at the myſteries, but he ſuppoſes it, ἀπόῤῥητα, to be *obſcurely ſignified* by thoſe ceremonies of purgation.

(*x*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 195.

(*y*) Ibid. p. 190, 191.

" under the patronage of thoſe deities, who were ſuppoſed to " inſpire and preſide over ſenſual paſſions; ſuch as Bacchus, " Venus, and Cupid; for theſe had all their myſteries: and " where was the wonder, if the initiated ſhould be ſomtimes in- " clined to give a looſe to thoſe vices, in which the patron god " was ſuppoſed to delight? And in this caſe, the hidden doctrine " came too late to put a ſtop to the diſorder (*z*)." And he there alſo mentions what he calls " that very flagitious part of the " myſterious rites when at worſt, the carrying the ΚΤΕΙΣ and " ΦΑΛΛΟΣ in proceſſion (*a*)." He ſays indeed, that " it was " introduced but under pretence of their being emblems of the " myſtical regeneration, and new life, into which the initiated " had engaged themſelves to enter." But it is no way probable, that this was the original ground of introducing it, but a pretence invented for it after it was introduced; for the ſame reaſon that they endeavoured to find out allegorical meanings and phyſical explications for ſome other parts of the myſteries. And a moſt abſurd pretence it was; as if ſuch obſcene rites which ſhock common modeſty were fit emblems of inward purity, and of an entrance on a life of the ſtricteſt virtue. Arnobius juſtly expoſes the abſurdity of couching holy myſteries under obſcene repreſentations, on pretence that they had a profound and ſacred mean-

(*z*) Div. Leg. p. 192.

(*a*) He ſeems here to intimate, as if this part of the rites was not brought in till the lateſt and moſt corrupt times of the myſteries. But there is no proof of this. On the contrary, it ſeems to have been one of the moſt antient rites uſed in the myſteries of Iſis, from which the Eleuſinian myſteries were derived.

ing.

ing (*b*). And he applies this particularly to the Eleuſinian myſteries (*c*). I cannot therefore but think, that whatever was the original intention of the myſteries, they were frequently ſo conducted as to have a moſt pernicious influence in countenancing and heightening that impurity and diſſoluteneſs of manners, which became ſo general in the Pagan world. And to them probably St. Paul refers when he ſaith, "It is a ſhame even to ſpeak of thoſe things "which were done by them in ſecret." Eph. v. 12. And our learned author himſelf thinks, this great apoſtle had the myſteries particularly in view, in what he ſaith concerning the wiſe men of the Gentiles, Rom. i. 20, et ſeq. That "God in puniſhment for "their *turning his truth into a lie*, ſuffered their myſteries which "they erected for a ſchool of virtue, to degenerate into an "odious ſink of vice and immorality; *giving them up unto all un-*"*cleanneſs and vile affections* (*d*)."

But not to inſiſt longer upon this, what the ſubject we are upon leads us principally to conſider is, whether and how far the myſteries were deſigned to detect the error of polytheiſm, and to inſtruct the initiated in the knowledge of the one true God. And as to this our learned author propoſes to ſhew, that "the clear "evidence of antiquity expreſly informs us of theſe two particu-"lars; that the errors of polytheiſm were detected, and the "doctrine of the unity taught and explained in the myſteries (*e*).

(*b*) See Arnob. adverſ. Gentes, his fifth book throughout.

(*c*) Ibid. and eſpecially p. 173, et ſeq.

(*d*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 196. Marg. note.

(*e*) Ibid. p. 157.

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One would expect after ſuch a declaration, that the proofs from antiquity, with reſpect to both theſe particulars, ſhould be very clear. Let us therefore briefly conſider the evidence that is produced.

The firſt thing propoſed to be proved is, That the errors of polytheiſm were detected in the myſteries: or, as he elſewhere expreſſes it, that they diſcovered the whole deluſion of polytheiſm to ſuch as were judged capable of the ſecret. And he explains himſelf farther by ſaying, That the ἀπόῤῥητα, or ſecret doctrines of the myſteries, overthrew the vulgar polytheiſm, the worſhip of dead men: and that the fabulous gods, the whole rabble of licentious deities were routed there (*f*). This repreſention of the deſign of the Pagan myſteries is very honourable to them, if it can be ſupported with clear evidence; but it appears to me that not one of the teſtimonies produced for it by the learned author of the Divine Legation comes up to the point they are intended to prove. The firſt is a paſſage quoted from St. Auſtin concerning an Egyptian hierophant, who informed Alexander the Great, that even the deities of an higher order had once been men (*g*). This is followed by two quotations from Cicero, who, according to our author, tells us, that "not only the Eleuſinian myſteries, "but the Samothracian and the Lemnian, taught the error of "polytheiſm (*h*)." But all that can be gathered from the

(*f*) The paſſages here referred to are quoted above, p. 202, 203.

(*g*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 157, 158.

(*h*) Ibid. p. 159, 160.

two paſſages here cited is, not that the error of the vulgar polytheiſm was taught in the myſteries, but only that the dii majorum gentium, the chief of the gods vulgarly adored, had been taken from the human race into heaven. But Cicero, who ſays this, neither gives it as his own opinion, nor repreſents it as the doctrine of the myſteries, that therefore they were not to be regarded as gods, nor to be worſhipped as ſuch. On the contrary, in one of thoſe paſſages he plainly approves the deification of famous and excellent men; and ſo he does on ſeveral other occaſions; inſtances of which were produced above, p. 110. And the worſhip of ſuch deities is what he expreſly preſcribes in his book of laws. "Ex hominum genere conſecratos coli lex jubet (*i*)." Julius Firmicus, in the paſſage produced from him, charges the Pagans with having conſecrated or deified dead men; but he is far from ſuppoſing that the myſteries condemned that practice, but rather on the contrary that they approved and encouraged it (*k*). Theſe are all the teſtimonies brought to prove, that the myſteries were deſigned to detect the error and deluſion of the vulgar polytheiſm: for as to the hint, as our author calls it, given by Plutarch, that the true nature of dæmons was held forth in the myſteries, ſince that philoſopher does not explain what he means by it, but ſays a ſacred ſilence is to be obſerved, nothing can be concluded from it at all. The whole amount then of the evidence on this head is no more than this, that in the myſteries the initiated were inſtructed that the popular deities had been once men: but no proof is brought, that the ἀπόῤῥητα overthrew the

(*i*) De Leg. lib. ii. cap. viii. p. 100. et cap. xi. p. 115. Edit. Davis.

(*k*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 162.

vulgar

vulgar polytheiſm, the worſhip of dead men. Nor do I believe any one paſſage can be produced from all Pagan antiquity to ſhew, that the deſign of the myſteries was to undeceive the people as to the vulgar polytheiſm, and to draw them off from the worſhip of the deities commonly adored. Their having been once men was very conſiſtent, in the notions which then obtained, with their divinity. The Cretan, who, as this learned author obſerves from Diodorus, celebrated the myſteries openly, and publiſhed their ἀπόῤῥητα, or ſacred doctrines, i. e. thoſe which in other places were kept hidden or ſecret, without reſerve, boaſted of having Jupiter's tomb among them; but this did not hinder them from regarding and worſhipping him as the chief of the deities, the Father of gods and men (*l*). In like manner the Egyptian prieſts, as Plutarch informs us, pretended to ſhew the ſepulchre of Oſiris, yet this was not thought to be an objection againſt their worſhipping him as a god.

Allowing therefore the fact, that in the myſteries ſome account was given of the hiſtory of their gods, which led the initiated to conclude, that the popular deities, even the principal of them, had been originally of the human race, it does not follow, that therefore the myſteries were deſigned to detect the error and deluſion of the vulgar polytheiſm, and to overthrow the worſhip of their deities. Some of the Pagans were indeed ſenſible, that if it was once allowed that their gods had been of human extraction, this might be turned to the diſadvantage of the public religion. Hence it was, that the Roman pontiff Scævola, in a paſſage cited

(*l*) Div. Leg. p. 183.

before,

before, was for having it concealed from the people that even Hercules, Æſculapius, Caſtor and Pollux, had been once mortal men, leſt they ſhould not regard and worſhip them as gods (*m*). And Plutarch, in his treatiſe De Iſid. et Oſir. ſpeaking of thoſe who repreſented ſome of the gods to have been originally famous men, who had obtained the honour of divinity, ſays, that this is to attempt to move things which ought not to be ſtirred, and to bring down thoſe great and venerable names from heaven to earth, and thereby to overturn and diſſolve that religious perſuaſion, which hath taken poſſeſſion of the minds of almoſt all men from their birth: that it is to open a wide door to the atheiſtical crowd, who are for turning divine things into human, and to give a ſplendid licence to the illuſions of Euhemerus the Meſſenian, whom he there charges as having ſcattered all manner of atheiſm through the world (*n*). It may ſeem a little ſurpriſing, that Plutarch ſhould here repreſent that as an impious and atheiſtical doctrine, which, according to our learned author, the myſtagogues taught the initiated in the greater myſteries, and which Cicero and others made no ſcruple of declaring. But whatever Plutarch and ſome others might think of it, thoſe that inſtituted and conducted the myſteries ſeem to have been of another mind. If they taught the initiated, that the gods commonly received had been once men, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that they took care that the public religion ſhould not ſuffer by it, by letting them know, that notwithſtanding this they ought to be regarded as gods, and to

(*m*) Apud Auguſt. De Civit. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 27. p. 84.

(*n*) Plutarch. Oper. tom. ii. p. 359, 360. Edit. Francof.

have that divine honour and worſhip rendered to them which antient tradition and the laws required.

And indeed this ſeems plainly to follow from the conceſſions which our learned advocate for the myſteries is ſometimes obliged to make. He tells us, that one important uſe, to which what he calls *the detection of the national gods*, that is, the ſhewing that they had been men, was deſigned, was " to excite men to " heroic virtue, by ſhewing them what honours the benefactors " of nations had acquired by the free exerciſe of it (*o*)." The honours here referred to are *divine honours*, as he himſelf elſewhere calls them (*p*). This alſo appears from the paſſage he quotes from Tully's ſecond book of laws, where it is ordered, that thoſe ſhould be worſhipped whoſe merit had placed them in heaven: as alſo from the fragment of Sanchoniathon, which he ſuppoſes to have been the very hiſtory narrated to the Ἐποπται in the greater myſteries (*q*). He aſks, " What ſtronger excitement " had heroic minds, than to be taught, as they are in this frag- " ment, that public benefits to their fellow-creatures were re- " warded with immortality (*r*)?" It ſhould have been ſaid, that, according to that fragment, they were rewarded with divine

(*o*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 155, where he adds, that " this was the chief rea- " ſon why princes, ſtateſmen, and leaders of colonies and armies, all aſpired to be " partakers of the greater myſteries."

(*p*) Ibid. p. 183.

(*q*) Ibid. p. 168, 171.

(*r*) Ibid. p. 173. And he there repreſents theſe things " as eſſential to the in- " ſtruction of the myſteries;" and makes this an argument to prove, that that hiſtory was compoſed for the uſe of the myſteries.

honours: for it is there expreſly ſaid, that after their death they were worſhipped as gods, and had ſacrifices offered to them; of which ſeveral inſtances are given. And he repreſents it as "the "purpoſe of that fragment to ſhew, that the popular deities were "only dead men deified (*s*)." Now the queſtion is, Whether the deſign of introducing the hiſtory of their gods, as having been deified men, was with a view to condemn the worſhipping them, or to approve of it? It could not be to condemn it, ſince by ſhewing the divine honours which were rendered to them for the ſervices they had done the public, they deſigned to excite men to heroic virtue. If this was one important uſe of the myſteries intended by the legiſlators and magiſtrates, as is plainly aſſerted in the paſſages now produced, this ſhews they did not intend by the myſteries to overthrow the worſhip that was rendered to them. For this would be to counteract and defeat their own deſign. And indeed this is what our author himſelf ſeems expreſly to grant; when ſpeaking of what Virgil calls

"Vana ſuperſtitio, veterumque ignara deorum,"

He ſaith, that "the Pagan lawgiver took much care to rectify it "in the myſteries, not by deſtroying that ſpecies of idolatry, the "worſhip of dead men, which was indeed his own invention, "but by ſhewing why they paid that worſhip, namely, for be-"nefits done by thoſe deified heroes to the whole race of man-"kind (*t*)." Here it is declared, that the Pagan lawgiver did not intend by the myſteries to deſtroy the worſhip of dead men, but

(*s*) Div. Leg. p. 168, 169.

(*t*) Ibid. p. 221.

rather to give a reaſon for it, which tended to juſtify that practice. And if this were the caſe, I do not ſee how it can be ſaid, that "what the ἀπόῤῥητα overthrew was the vulgar polytheiſm, the "worſhip of dead men (*u*)." Where the reader may obſerve, that *the vulgar polytheiſm* and *the worſhip of dead men* are uſed as ſynonymous terms.

I think theſe obſervations are ſufficient to ſhew, that the teſtimonies brought to prove that the popular deities were once men, and were repreſented as ſuch in the myſteries, do not prove that the myſteries were intended to detect the error and deluſion of polytheiſm, and to ſubvert the worſhip of thoſe deities. This indeed was the inference the Chriſtians drew from it, who argued from the hiſtory of their gods to diſprove their divinity (*x*). And this probably was the principal reaſon, why the myſtagogues were very careful in their entrance on the celebration of the myſteries, that no Chriſtian ſhould be preſent at them.

Let us now proceed to examine the proofs which are brought for the ſecond particular, That the doctrine of the unity, or of the one God, the Creator and Governor of the world, was taught in the myſteries (*y*). This is what this celebrated writer, in the paſ-

(*w*) Div. Leg. p. 155.

(*x*) What Theophilus Antiochenus ſaid to his Heathen friend Autolycus, "the "names of the gods thou profeſſeſt to worſhip are the names of dead men,— "Τὰ μὲν ὀνόματα ὧν φῂς σέβεσθαι θεῶν ὀνόματα ἐστι νεκρῶν ἀνθρώπων," of which he there gives many inſtances, was the charge conſtantly urged by the Chriſtians in their diſputes againſt the Heathens. Theoph. ad Autol. lib. i. p. 75.

(*y*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 163, et ſeq.

ſages

ſages above referred to, expreſly affirms to be clear from the evidence of antiquity. To the ſame purpoſe he elſewhere obſerves, that "the Creator of all things was the ſubject of the ἀπόῤῥητα, "or ſecret in all the myſteries throughout the Gentile world (*z*)." And again, that "the knowledge of the true God was taught, "though to few, all over the Gentile world, and only in the "myſteries (*a*)." But though I will not pretend to affirm, that no ſuch doctine was taught there, yet this, I think, may be ſafely ſaid, that there is no ſufficient evidence brought to prove it.

The teſtimonies firſt produced are two of Clemens Alexandrinus, and one of Chryſippus (*b*). But all that can be gathered from them is, that the myſteries treated of divine matters, of the nature of the gods, and of the univerſe: but they have not one word to ſhew that the doctrine of the unity was taught there. Nor is the paſſage produced from Strabo more expreſs. It is true that Strabo there ſaith, that "the ſecret celebration of the myſte-"ries preſerves the majeſty due to the divinity, and at the ſame "time imitates its nature, which hides itſelf from our ſenſes." But by the divinity he does not ſeem there to underſtand the one Supreme God, as diſtinguiſhed from inferior deities, but the divinity in whoſe name and to whoſe honour the myſteries were celebrated; and he immediately after makes mention of Apollo, Ceres, and Bacchus, as the deities ſacred among the Greeks,

(*z*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 166.

(*a*) Ibid. p. 168.

(*b*) Ibid. p. 163.

to

to each of whom, according to the prevailing theology, divinity was aſcribed. And whereas our learned author adds, that Strabo makes philoſophy "the object of the myſteries, which," he thinks, "removes all ambiguity," I cannot find, upon a careful examination of the paſſage as it lies in the original, that Strabo there repreſents philoſophy as the object about which the myſteries are converſant. But allowing it to be ſo, ſince he does not explain what philoſophy it was, it would ſtill leave us in the dark. For that the philoſophers were far from agreeing in their notions of the Divinity, ſufficiently appears from Cicero's celebrated book, De naturâ Deorum (*c*). The paſſage that followeth this is from Plutarch, who in his treatiſe of Iſis and Oſiris, ſpeaking of the temple of Iſis, pretends to give the etymology of the name, that it is called Ἰσεῖον, becauſe thoſe that approach it with prudence and ſanctity ſhall know the τὸ ὄν. This is Plutarch's own gloſs upon it; and that it is not much to be depended upon will appear to any man that impartially conſiders the nature and deſign of that treatiſe. "It was directly written to ſupport the national religion, which "had taken the alarm. His purpoſe in it is to ſhew, that all its "multiform worſhip was only an addreſs to the Supreme Being "under various names and covers." This is the account our learned author himſelf gives of it, and he has very well expoſed Plutarch's ſcheme, and the ſhifts he was put upon to ſupport it (*d*). And indeed the reading of that book of Plutarch, though it abounds with variety of learning, is ſufficient to convince any

(*c*) P. 164.

(*d*) Div. Leg. vol. ii. p. 308, 309. Edit. 4th.

thinking

thinking man of the ſtrange confuſion of the Pagan theology, eſpecially that of the Egyptians, which was moſt admired, and from which many other nations derived theirs.

The next teſtimony is from Galen: Speaking of the benefit that would ariſe not only to the phyſician, but to the philoſopher, who labours to inveſtigate the univerſal nature, from conſidering the parts of the human body, he ſays, that "thoſe who initiate "themſelves here have nothing like it in the Eleuſinian or Samo-"thracian myſteries—οὐδὲν ὅμοιον ἔχουσιν Ελευσινίοις τε καὶ Σαμοθρα-"κίοις ὀργίοις." Galen ſeems here to intimate, that the Divine Nature was treated of in the myſteries; but ſays nothing from whence we can form a judgment, whether they were deſigned to inſtruct men in the unity, or what kind of doctrine was taught there; only that it was not to be compared to that which was to be learned from conſidering the human body; which is the ſubject of his excellent book De Uſu Partium.

The paſſage which is next produced is from Euſebius. And it ſeems a little odd, that becauſe Euſebius makes uſe of ſome terms employed in the Pagan myſteries, he ſhould be brought in as a voucher, that the doctrine of the unity was taught in thoſe myſteries. For this very paſſage ſhews the contrary. Euſebius expreſly ſays, that "for the Hebrew people alone was reſerved the honour "of being initiated into the knowledge of God the Creator of all "things, and of being inſtructed in the practice of true piety to-"wards him (*e*)." And it ſufficiently appears from what he

(*e*) Div. Leg. vol. i. p. 165.

after-

afterwards ſays of the Pagan myſteries, that he was far from thinking that the doctrine of the one true God was taught there.

But what this learned writer ſeems to lay the principal ſtreſs upon is the teſtimony of Joſephus, than which, he ſays, nothing can be more explicit (*f*). But I muſt confeſs, it does not appear ſo to me. Joſephus is there vindicating the Jews againſt the calumnies of Apion, and ſhews the advantages they enjoyed for the knowledge and practice of religion and piety above other nations. The Gentiles boaſted mightily of their initiations and myſteries, which were regarded as the moſt ſacred part of their religion. Joſephus, who appears throughout all his works to be very careful not to give offence to the Gentiles, ſays nothing to the diſparagement of their myſteries, which they would not have borne; but ſuppoſing them to be as holy and divine as they would have them to be, he obſerves, that they only returned at certain ſeaſons, and were ſolemnized for a few days; whereas the Jews, by the benefit of their ſacred rites and laws, enjoyed all the advantages pretended to in thoſe myſteries, through the whole courſe of their lives. This ſeems to be the genuine ſenſe and ſcope of this paſſage. But it is obſervable, that Joſephus does not enter upon the conſideration of the nature and deſign of thoſe myſteries, or the doctrines that were taught there; though he is very plain and expreſs in the account he gives of the principles the Jews were taught in their laws, particularly relating to the one

(*f*) Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 9.

true

true abſolutely perfect God, the ſole Cauſe of all exiſtence (*g*). I think therefore this paſſage affords no valid argument to prove, that the doctrine of the unity was taught in the myſteries. Nor do I ſee how it can well be ſuppoſed, that a Jewiſh prieſt ſhould be a competent witneſs to inform us of what was the principal ſecret of the Pagan myſteries, and which they were bound under the moſt tremendous ſeal of ſecreſy not to reveal.

Theſe are all the teſtimonies produced by this admired writer when he profeſſedly undertakes to prove, that the doctrine of the unity, or of the one true God, in oppoſition to the Pagan polytheiſm, was taught in the myſteries. And I think it may be left to any impartial reader, whether they ſufficiently prove this point. But there is another thing which he urgeth afterwards, which, if it could be depended upon, would be much more to his purpoſe than any of the teſtimonies he had mentioned: and that is, the Hymn of Orpheus, mentioned by Clemens Alexandrinus, in which the doctrine of the unity is plainly aſſerted, and which he endeavours to ſhew was the very hymn that was ſung to the initiated in the Eleuſinian myſteries, by the hierophant, habited like the Creator. But it by no means appears, that Clement intended to ſignify that that ſong made a part of the myſteries. He takes notice indeed of a poem made by Orpheus on the myſteries, and which he ſuppoſes to have contained an account of thoſe myſteries, and of the theology of idols. And he alſo mentions the hymn in queſtion, which he ſuppoſes likewiſe to have been com-

(*g*) Div. Leg. vol. i. p. 176.

poſed by Orpheus, and which contained a quite contrary doctrine. But he does not ſeem to mean, that this hymn was a part of that poem in which Orpheus gave an account of the myſteries, but rather to have looked upon it as a diſtinct poem compoſed by Orpheus afterwards, and in which he ſuppoſes him to have recanted the doctrines he had taught in the former. This appears to me to be a juſt account of Clement's meaning, and muſt be allowed to be ſo, if we would make that learned father conſiſtent with himſelf. His manner of introducing it is remarkable. "The Thracian hierophant," ſays he, "and who was at the "ſame time a poet, Orpheus, the ſon of Oeager, after he had "opened or explained the myſteries and the theology of idols, "introduces the truth, and makes his recantation; ſinging, "though late, a truly holy ſong (*b*)." Here Clement ſeems plainly to oppoſe theſe verſes to the account Orpheus had given of the myſteries, and makes them to be in effect a palinodia, or recantation of the whole theology of the myſteries, which he calls the theology of idols. But he repreſents him as late in making this recantation and ſinging this holy ſong. And I do not well ſee upon what ground this could be ſaid, if that very ſong made a part of the myſteries, and was ſung by the hierophant himſelf, at the very time of the celebration of thoſe myſteries, and before the aſſembly was diſmiſſed. For at that rate, the verſes were ſung in the proper ſeaſon in which they ought to be ſung, accord-

(*b*) "Ὁ δὲ Θρᾴκιος Ἱεροφάντης καὶ ποιητὴς ἅμα, ὁ τοῦ Οἰαγροῦ Ὀρφεὺς μετὰ τὴν τῶν "ἱεροφαντιῶν καὶ τῶν εἰδώλων τὴν θεολογίαν παλινῳδίαν ἀληθείας εἰσάγει, τὸν ἱερὸν ὄντως "ὕμνον ποτε ὅμως δ' ἂν ἀδων λόγον." Clem. Admonitio ad Gent. p. 63, 64. Edit. Potter.

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ing to the courſe and order of the myſteries. Our learned author indeed has tranſlated the latter part of that paſſage differently from what I have done. " The ſacreds then truly begin, though " late, and thus he enters upon the matter." This ſeems to imply that the hymn referred to properly belonged to the myſteries, and made the moſt ſolemn and venerable part of them: But I ſee nothing in the original that can anſwer to thoſe words in his tranſlation, " the ſacreds then truly begin." Nor can I ſuppoſe, that if Clement had believed this hymn, which he himſelf produces, as containing a clear acknowledgment of the one true God, to have been a part, and the moſt ſacred part, of the myſteries, he would have called thoſe myſteries, as he does in a paſſage to be produced afterwards, " the myſteries of atheiſts;" or ſay of thoſe who celebrated and conducted them, that " they " do not acknowledge him, who is truly and really God." To all which it may be added, that this hymn of Orpheus is very juſtly ſuſpected, as would have appeared if the whole had been produced. It is only the firſt part of it which is cited by our learned author from Clement's admonition to the Gentiles. But it is given more largely by the ſame Clement in his Stromata (*i*); and at ſtill greater length by Euſebius (*k*), who quotes it from Ariſtobulus, a Jewiſh peripatetic philoſopher. And this philoſopher produces it to ſhew, that Orpheus and the Greeks took their doctrine of God the Creator of the univerſe from the books of Moſes. And indeed ſome of the verſes cited from this poem

(*i*) Clem. Strom. v. Oper. p. 723, et ſeq.

(*k*) Præp. Evangel. lib. xiii. cap. 12.

ſeem plainly to point to Moſes, and deſcribe him as having been drawn out of the water, and as having received the law from God in two tables: and others of them relate no leſs plainly to Abraham, to whom Clement applies them. The learned Dr. Cudworth, though very willing to catch at any thing in a Pagan writer that favours the doctrine of the unity, pronounces theſe verſes to be a manifeſt forgery, and ſo far ſuſpects ſome other of the verſes aſcribed to Orpheus, and produced by the fathers, that he thinks it not ingenuous to lay a ſtreſs upon them; and therefore declares, that he will produce no verſes of Orpheus as an acknowledgment of the one Supreme Being, but ſuch as are atteſted by Pagan writers (*l*). And even the authority of theſe is of no great weight. Many learned perſons, both antient and modern, have been of opinion, that we have no verſes of Orpheus remaining which can be depended upon as his. As to the hymn's being ſung by the hierophant, habited like the Creator, this is advanced without any proof. And as in that caſe it muſt have related to the moſt ſacred part of the hidden doctrine of the myſteries, and which, by our author's hypotheſis, was communicated by the hierophant only to a few of the initiated under the moſt tremendous ſeal of ſecreſy, it is hard to conceive how it ſhould come to be openly publiſhed to the world, ſo that the Jews and Chriſtians ſhould know it (*m*). We are told indeed by Euſebius, that the hierophant in the Eleuſinian myſteries put on the habit of the

(*l*) Intel. Syſt. p. 300, 301.

(*m*) There are among the works aſcribed by Heathen writers to Orpheus, ſome hymns ſaid to have been ſung at the myſteries; but theſe are hymns to particular deities, and do not relate to what is ſuppoſed to be the great ſecret of the myſteries. See Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 179.

demi-

demiurgus (*n*). But ſuppoſing this to be underſtood of the Maker or Former of the world, it is no ſufficient proof that the proper doctrine of the unity was taught in the myſteries. Ovid, whom the author of the Divine Legation repreſents as having been very well acquainted with the Pagan theology, and as having exhibited a beautiful ſyſtem of it in his Metamorphoſes, has given an account of the creation of the world in his firſt book. He attributes it to God, whom he calls mundi fabricator, and ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo—which contains a full explication of the word Δημιουργος. Yet it does not appear, that he acknowledged the unity in the ſenſe here pretended. On the contrary he ſuppoſes a plurality of gods, and that the world was made by one of them, but which of them to aſcribe it to he could not tell.

" Quiſquis fuit ille deorum (*o*)."

I think it appears from what has been offered, that " there is no " clear evidence of antiquity which expreſly informs us, that the " doctrine of the unity was taught and explained in the myſte- " ries;" which is what our author propoſed to ſhew (*p*). And

(*n*) Præp. Evangel. lib. iii. cap. 12. p. 117.

(*o*) The Pagan writers ſometimes ſpeak of one Maker of the world, and ſometimes they repreſent the gods as the makers of the world. " O Jupiter, and the " gods, the fathers and makers of the earth and ſea.—Ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ θεοὶ πατέρες καὶ " ποιηταὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης." Max. Tyr. Diſſert. 34. See alſo Phurnut. De Nat. Deor. p. 3. In an inſcription on an Egyptian obeliſk the ſun is ſtiled " Κτίστης τῆς " ὑικουμένης.—The framer or opificer of the world." Fuller Miſcel. Sacra, lib. i. cap. 14. And in the Orphic verſes, cited by Macrobius, he is repreſented as the father of ſea and land. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 23.

(*p*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 157.

I am perſuaded, that if there had been any ſuch evidence, it could not have eſcaped the ſagacity and diligence of this very acute and learned writer. But ſuppoſing it clearly proved, this could not have had any great influence on the ſtate of religion in the Pagan world. As will appear from two conſiderations.

1. There is great reaſon to think that the notion given of the Deity in the myſteries was not a very right and juſt one. It will be afterwards ſhewn that the philoſophers were for the moſt part very wrong in their notions of the Divinity; and it can hardly be ſuppoſed that the civil magiſtrates and great men of the ſtate knew more of this matter than the philoſophers. It has been obſerved, that the Cretans publiſhed the ſecret doctrines of the myſteries, and conſequently the unity, if this was one of them, to all that had a deſire to know them. But if the Cretans acknowledged any one god ſupreme above the reſt, it was Jupiter, whoſe tomb they pretended to have among them, and whom they regarded and celebrated as the Father of gods and men, "the Ruler "and Lord of all.—Ἀρχων ϗ κυριος πάντων," as Plutarch in his tract De Iſid. et Oſir. repreſents their ſenſe (*q*). As to the Egyptians, from whom other nations are ſaid to have derived their myſteries, their wiſe men were much divided in their opinions concerning the Deity. Porphyry tells us, that the Egyptians called the demiurgus, or maker of the world, kneph, whom they repreſented in an human form (*r*). But the ſame Porphyry, in his

(*q*) Plut. Oper. tom. ii. p. 381. D.

(*r*) Kneph ſeems, by Plutarch's account, to have been the god that was particularly adored by the people of Thebais. Porphyry repreſents him as in a human form;

his epiſtle to Anebo, an Egyptian prieſt, ſays, that Chæremon and other learned Egyptians held the ſun to be the demiurgus, to whom they attributed the formation of all things, and did not acknowledge any incorporeal author of the univerſe. See Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iii. cap. xi. p. 115. compared with lib. iii. cap. 4. p. 92. and cap. 13. p. 119. Plutarch informs us from Hecatæus, that the Egyptians regarded the τὸ πᾶν, or the univerſe, to be the Firſt or Supreme God. And Apuleius, in his account of the ſacred myſteries of Iſis, calls her "rerum natura parens;" which our author ſays, "ſhews plainly what were the ἀπόῤῥητα, "or ſecret doctrines of all the myſteries." And he elſewhere obſerves, "that the univerſal nature was diſguiſed under divers names, "and called by the Egyptians the queen Iſis." Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 203 and 315.

2. The ſecond conſideration is this, That ſuppoſing them to have taught juſt notions of God in the myſteries, it was of no great uſe, becauſe they taught this part of the ſecret doctrine of the myſteries to a very few. This appears from ſome of the paſſages already produced, to which I ſhall add two more which are very expreſs to this purpoſe. The one is in Div. Leg. vol. i. p. 166, marg. note, where it is ſaid, that the knowledge of God was communicated "to a few ſelect Gentiles in theſe myſteries,

form; but in the fragment of Sanchoniathon, preſerved by Euſebius, it is ſaid as from the ſacred books of Taautus, that he attributed a divine virtue to the ſerpent, which the Phœnicians called a good dæmon, and the Egpytians called him kneph, whom they repreſented as a ſerpent with a hawk's head. Euſeb. Præp. Evang. lib. i. cap. 10. p. 41.

"cele-

" celebrated in ſecret—which not being done in order to give " him glory, by promoting his public and general worſhip, was " done in vain." The other is ibid. p. 196, 197, marg. note, where what St. Paul ſays of the Gentile ſages is applied to the myſteries, that " when they knew God, they glorified him not " as God by preaching him up to the people, but carried away in " the vanity of their imagination, by a miſtaken principle of poli- " tics, that a vulgar knowledge of him would be injurious to " ſociety, ſhut up his glory in their myſteries, and gave the " people in exchange for *an incorruptible God, an image made like* " *to corruptible man and birds*," &c. It is there alſo obſerved, that what the apoſtle ſaith, that they worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than the Creator, " was ſtrictly true with regard to the " myſteries. The Creator was there acknowledged by a ſmall " and ſelect number of the participants; but the general and " ſolemn worſhip in theſe celebrations was to their national " idols."

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Some farther conſiderations to ſhew, that the deſign of the myſteries was not to detect the errors of the Pagan polytheiſm. The legiſlators and magiſtrates who inſtituted and conducted the myſteries, were themſelves the chief promoters of the popular polytheiſm from political views, and therefore it is improbable that they intended ſecretly to ſubvert it by the myſteries. Their ſcheme upon ſuch a ſuppoſition abſurd and inconſtant. The myſteries were, in fact, of no advantage for reclaiming the Heathens from their idolatries. The primitive Chriſtians not to be blamed for the bad opinion they had of the Pagan myſteries.

THE obſervations which have been made may perhaps be judged ſufficient to ſhew, that little ſtreſs can be laid upon the boaſted expedient ſuppoſed to have been contrived by the civil magiſtrate for detecting the error of polytheiſm, and inſtructing men in the knowledge of the one true God. But it may be of uſe to add ſome farther conſiderations on this ſubject.

And here it is proper to take notice of an argument, which the celebrated author of the Divine Legation ſeems to regard as a plain proof, that the myſteries were deſigned to detect and overthrow the error of the vulgar polytheiſm. He obſerves, That what the legiſlators and civil magiſtrates had principally in view in inſtituting and conducting the myſteries, was the promoting the

practice of virtue among the people for the good of the ſociety. "But there was one inſuperable obſtacle to it, the vicious ex- "amples of their gods.——It was therefore neceſſary to remedy "this evil, which they did by ſtriking at the root of it. The "myſtagogue taught the initiated, that Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, "Mars, and the whole rabble of licentious deities, were indeed "only dead mortals, ſubject in life to the ſame paſſions and vices "with themſelves.——The fabulous gods being thus routed, the "Supreme Cauſe of all things took their place," &c. See the paſſage quoted at large above, p. 202.

I readily agree with this learned writer, that the ill effect of the vicious examples of the gods could not be effectually prevented, but by overturning the vulgar polytheiſm, and diſcarding the popular deities. But the antient Heathens were of a different opinion. Some of them made no ſcruple of declaring their diſapprobation of the vicious actions aſcribed to their gods in the poetical fables: and yet it does not appear that they were for rejecting the deities themſelves, to whom thoſe actions were aſcribed, or turning the people from the worſhip of them. As, by our author's acknowledgment, they were only the poetical ſtories about the vicious actions of the gods that, in their opinion, made polytheiſm hurtful to the ſtate, they thought they might ſtill maintain the eſtabliſhed deities in the worſhip which was rendered to them according to the laws, and yet prevent the ill influence of thoſe fables upon the people. To this purpoſe it was pretended, that thoſe ſtories were not to be underſtood in the groſs literal ſenſe; and that they had a hidden meaning contained under them. Of this

we have a ſpecimen in the phyſical explication given by Varro of the ſtory of Proſerpine's having been raviſhed by Pluto, which was one of the things repreſented in the Eleuſinian myſteries (*a*). This was undoubtedly a fundamental defect in their ſcheme. For whilſt the poetical mythology kept its place in the public religion and worſhip, and the ſtories and antient traditions concerning the gods were held ſacred among the people, no phyſical or allegorical interpretations, which were for the moſt part ſtrained, could prevent the ill influence which the literal and obvious meaning would naturally have upon them. And for this reaſon among others it could ſcarce be expected, that the myſteries ſhould have a good effect in rectifying the religion or morals of the people. They were by no means intended to aboliſh the public ſyſtem of polytheiſm, and whilſt that continued in force with which thoſe fables were ſo cloſely interwoven, all attempts to defeat the bad effects of them were ineffectual and vain.

That the myſteries were not deſigned to overthrow the vulgar polytheiſm, may, I think, be fairly argued from this conſideration, That the legiſlators and civil magiſtrates who firſt inſtituted the myſteries, and continued to have the chief direction of them, " had," as our learned author obſerves, " the chief hand in the " riſe of the vulgar polytheiſm, and contrived that polytheiſm for " the ſake of the ſtate, to keep the people in awe, and under " a greater veneration for their laws (*b*)." And could it be ex-

(*a*) Apud Auguſt. De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 20. p. 136. Edit. Bened.

(*b*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 156.

pected from ſuch legiſlators and magiſtrates, that they, who, by his own acknowledgment, regarded not *truth* but *utility* (*c*), ſhould in good earneſt attempt to draw the people off from that polytheiſm which they themſelves had encouraged and eſtabliſhed for the welfare of the ſtate, and to keep the people under a greater veneration for the laws? After having ſaid, that "the fabulous "gods were routed in the myſteries, and that the initiated were "taught the doctrine of the unity, the Supreme Cauſe of all "things," he obſerves, that "theſe were the truths, which, Varro "tells us, it was inexpedient for the people to know, imagining "the error of the vulgar polytheiſm to be ſo inveterate, that it "was not to be expelled without throwing the ſociety into con-"vulſions (*d*)." And any one that duly conſiders the maxims by which the antient legiſlators and great men of the ſtate governed themſelves, will not readily believe that they were capable of forming a ſcheme, the tendency of which was, in their opinion, to throw the ſociety into convulſions. If it be urged, that this was the very reaſon of their "diſcovering the deluſion of poly-"theiſm in the myſteries only to ſuch of the initiated as were

(*c*) Speaking of the hidden doctrines of the ſchools of philoſophy, and thoſe of the myſteries of religion, he ſays, "They could not be the ſame, becauſe their "ends were very different: the end of philoſophy being only truth, the end of "religion only utility." P. 151. And in a marginal note, ibid. it is ſaid concerning the legiſlator and civil magiſtrate, that "whilſt he was too little ſollicit-"ous about truth, he encouraged a polytheiſm deſtructive of ſociety, to regulate "which, he, ſucceſsfully however, employed the myſteries." With what ſucceſs theſe myſteries were employed to regulate the vulgar polytheiſm, ſufficiently appears from the obſervations which I have here made, and ſhall farther make upon this ſubject.

(*d*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 155, 156.

"judged

" judged capable of the ſecret;" and that " this being ſuppoſed " the ſhaking foundations was to be done with all poſſible " circumſpection, and under the moſt tremendous ſeal of ſe- " creſy (*e*);" let us ſee whether this will account for the conduct of the legiſlators and magiſtrates, and render their ſcheme conſiſtent. Upon this view of it the expedient muſt ſtand thus: The legiſlators and magiſtrates, being convinced of the error and evil tendency of the vulgar polytheiſm, and yet being perſuaded that it would be dangerous to the ſtate to let this be generally known, contrived the myſteries, in which the initiated were to be inſtructed, that the deities commonly adored were no gods but only dead men, and that there is only one true God, the Creator and governor of the world; and at the ſame time were to be laid under the ſtricteſt obligations to keep this to themſelves, and not to divulge it. The language of the myſtagogue to the initiated muſt therefore be ſuppoſed to have been to this purpoſe. I am now going to reveal to you a thing which is of the higheſt importance to you to know, becauſe I look upon you to be perſons fit to be entruſted with the ſecret: and that is, that thoſe which are commonly eſteemed gods, and the worſhip of which makes up the public religion of the ſtate, are not gods, nor ought to be regarded as ſuch: that they are only dead men: that this rabble of licentious deities, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars, and others of the like ſort, ought to be routed and diſcarded; and that you

(*e*) He goes on to ſhew, that they were taught, that the gods would puniſh the revealers of the ſecret, and not only them but the hearers of it too: beſides which the ſtate decreed capital puniſhments againſt the betrayers of the myſteries. Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 180.

ſhould

ſhould acknowledge and adore the one only God, the Creator and Governor of the univerſe. But then you are bound by the moſt ſacred oaths and engagements to keep what I now tell you an inviolable ſecret. To reveal it would expoſe you to the divine vengeance, and to the capital puniſhments denounced by the laws againſt the betrayers of the myſteries; and it would be of the moſt pernicious conſequence to ſpread this doctrine among the people. You muſt ſtill go on to worſhip the popular gods as before, and muſt never attempt the leaſt alteration in the eſtabliſhed religion and worſhip.

This appears to me to be a ſtrange inconſiſtent ſcheme. And it is hard to conceive what the legiſlator could propoſe by ſo odd and unaccountable a management. It was not the virtue of a few individuals but of the ſociety in general that he muſt be ſuppoſed to have in view: and how could this end be anſwered by committing the ſecret, which is ſuppoſed to be of ſuch importance to the morals of the people, only to a few of the initiated, who were at the ſame time brought under the moſt ſolemn engagements not to diſcover it? And even as to thoſe few to whom the ſecret was communicated, to what purpoſe would it be to inſtruct them in doctrines they were not to make uſe of? Or, what opinion could they have of the honeſty of thoſe that ſhould inſtruct them to deſpiſe thoſe popular deities, whom yet they would have them publicly adore? And who ſhould diſcover to them the deluſion of the vulgar polytheiſm, and the falſhood of the religion of their country, and yet urge it upon them as a duty to conform to it? If the myſteries were founded upon ſuch a plan, it is not

to

to be wondered at, that they had little effect on the minds and manners of men.

But I cannot bring myſelf to believe, that the legiſlators ever intended, that there ſhould be any thing in the myſteries which ſhould expoſe the eſtabliſhed religion and worſhip to comtempt. If Virgil has, according to our author's moſt ingenious conjecture, made a genuine repreſentation of the myſteries in the 6th book of his Æneid, "non temnere divos—not to contemn the gods," was a leſſon carefully inculcated there (*f*). Inſtead of being intended to prejudice perſons againſt the religion of their country, it is reaſonable to believe that they were rather deſigned to ſtrengthen their attachment to it; and by ſhews and ſtriking repreſentations, fitted to work upon the imaginations of the people, to impreſs them with a greater awe and veneration for their deities. Accordingly it is obſervable, that thoſe who were moſt zealous for the myſteries, were wont alſo to manifeſt the greateſt zeal for the Pagan religion; and they who were enemies to the Pagan polytheiſm, as the primitive Chriſtians univerſally were, had a very bad opinion of the myſteries.

That they were not intended to ſubvert by their ſecret doctrines the vulgar polytheiſm, may be farther argued from this conſideration, that theſe myſteries were, according to this learned writer, "under the preſidency of various gods, and were celebrated in "their names, and to their honour." He names Iſis and Oſiris,

(*f*) It was one of the laws of Charondas, as Stobæus informs us, "Let the "contempt of the gods be reckoned among the greateſt crimes." Stob. ſerm. 42.

Mythras,

Mythras, the mother of the gods, Bacchus, Venus, Jupiter, Ceres, and Proſerpina, Caſtor and Pollux, Vulcan, and many others (*g*). And he obſerves, that " each of the Pagan gods had (beſides the " public and open) a ſecret worſhip paid unto him: to which " none were admitted but thoſe who had been ſelected by pre- " paratory ceremonies, called *initiations*. This ſecret worſhip " was termed the myſteries. But though every god had, beſides " his *open* worſhip the *ſecret* likewiſe, yet this latter did not *every* " *where* attend the former, but only *there* where he was the " patron god, or in principal eſteem (*h*)." I think it hence follows, that there was only this difference between the public worſhip of thoſe gods, and that rendered to them in the myſteries, that the latter was attended with ſome peculiar circumſtances, and performed in a more ſolemn manner, not by all promiſcuouſly, but by thoſe who by a particular initiation were prepared for it. The myſteries therefore were not deſigned to diſcard the worſhip of thoſe deities, but to add a greater ſolemnity to it. And particularly they were intended for the honour of the patron deity, and were celebrated in places where he " was had in principal " eſteem." But how could it be ſaid, that in the myſteries the ſecret worſhip of thoſe deities was celebrated, if the deſign of the ſecret doctrine of thoſe myſteries was to ſhew that they were no gods, and that no worſhip was due to them at all? And indeed if the people had the leaſt ſuſpicion that this was the deſign of the ſecret doctrine taught in the myſteries, far from regarding them with ſo profound a veneration, they would have had them

(*g*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 138.

(*h*) Ibid. p. 137.

in abhorrence (*i*). The Athenians, who expelled Anaxagoras and put Socrates to death, for ſhewing, as they ſuppoſed, a diſreſpect to the religion and gods of their country, would never have endured myſteries, in which the initiated were taught the error of polytheiſm, and whoſe ἀπόῤῥητα overthrew the worſhip of the gods commonly adored, and even of thoſe to whoſe honour the myſteries were celebrated. It was for ſeeming in a drunken frolick to make a mock of the holy myſteries, and for offending the goddeſſes Ceres and Proſerpina, to whom they were conſecrated, that Alcibiades had the judgment of death paſſed upon him, and which would certainly have been inflicted, if he had not ſaved himſelf by flight. The rage the people of Athens were put into by this, and by the breaking the images of Mercury, which happened at the ſame time, and the numbers that were put to death on the account of it, ſhew how very zealous they were for the honour of their gods, and that they thought it an execrable impiety and prophaneneſs to do any thing which tended to caſt contempt on the popular deities, on their images and ſacred rites. A particular account of this may be ſeen in Plutarch's life of Alcibiades.

(*i*) Every citizen of Athens was bound by oath to defend and conform to the religion of his country. This oath was in the name of the gods, and concluded thus. I ſwear by theſe following deities, the Agraull, Enyalius, Mars, Jupiter, the earth, and Diana. See Potter's Greek Antiquities, vol. i. p. 141, 142. And to have taught them, though in the moſt ſecret way, that the gods they had ſworn by were no gods, would have been looked upon as an attempt to ſubvert the commonwealth at the foundations, and to diſſolve the ſanction and obligatory force of thoſe oaths, which were thought to be the moſt powerful bands of the public ſafety and ſecurity.

To all this may be added an argument from fact and experience, which ſeems to me to be of great force, and that is, that though the myſteries were generally celebrated in almoſt all the Heathen nations, and eſpecially throughout the whole Roman empire, no effect of them appears in turning any of the people from their polytheiſm and idolatry. He talks indeed, in a paſſage cited above, of the legiſlator's having "ſucceſsfully employed" the myſteries for regulating the vulgar polytheiſm. But how is this proved? Can any inſtances be produced of perſons that were converted from the public idolatry and polytheiſm by the myſteries? Notwithſtanding this boaſted expedient it ſtill kept its ground, and made a continual progreſs among the Gentiles. The argument will receive an additional ſtrength and force, if applied to the caſe of the Athenians. Athens was the principal ſeat of the Eleuſinian, which were eſteemed the moſt ſacred and venerable of all the myſteries. There they were thought to be beſt underſtood, and to be celebrated in their greateſt purity, and in the moſt religious and ſolemn manner. All the Athenians in general were initiated. It might therefore have been expected, that if the deſign of the myſteries had been ſuch as is repreſented, it would have inſpired ſome of them with a ſecret contempt of their deities, and of the common polytheiſm: and that this, in time and by degrees, would have wrought a remarkable change among them. But the contrary is manifeſt from their whole hiſtory. They ſeem rather to have been more and more devoted to their idolatries and ſuperſtitions. Nor had their polytheiſm ever been at a greater height than at the time of our Saviour's appearing.

The

The laſt thing I ſhall obſerve concerning the myſteries, and which I confeſs has no ſmall weight with me, is, that if the deſign of them had been ſuch as the right reverend and learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes repreſents it, it is unconceivable that the antient Chriſtian writers ſhould have ſo univerſally exclaimed againſt them, as he owns they did. It may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that conſidering the great number of perſons which were converted from Heatheniſm to Chriſtianity in the firſt ages of the Chriſtian church, many of whom were of conſiderable parts and learning, there were not a few who had been admitted both to the leſſer and greater myſteries, and were therefore well acquainted with the nature and deſign of them. And though, whilſt they continued Pagans, they might have thought themſelves obliged not to reveal the ſecret doctrines which had been taught in the myſteries, yet upon their embracing Chriſtianity they would not have looked upon themſelves to be any longer under engagements to keep the ſecret. If they knew that in the myſteries men were brought under the moſt ſolemn obligations to a holy and virtuous life, and not only ſo, but that the ſecret doctrine taught in the moſt ſacred part of the myſteries was deſigned to detect the error of polytheiſm, to rout the fabulous deities, and to turn men from idols to the one true Supreme God, they muſt have had a good opinion of them, as ſo far at leaſt coinciding with the deſign of Chriſtianity. Why then did they not inſiſt upon this in their apologies for the Chriſtian religion, and in their diſputes with the Heathens argue from their own myſteries againſt the popular idolatry? On the contrary, in diſcourſes addreſſed to the Heathens themſelves, they frequently ſpeak of the myſteries

in terms of the utmoſt abhorrence, as impure and abominable (*k*), and as rather tending to confirm the people in their idolatry, than to draw them off from it. The making ſuch odious repreſentations of the myſteries, ſuppoſing they knew the deſign of them to be what this learned writer repreſents it (and if it had been ſo ſome of them muſt have known it) would have been abſolutely inconſiſtent with common honeſty and ingenuity: nor can I believe that ſuch good and excellent perſons, as many of the primitive Chriſtians undoubtedly were, could have been capable of ſuch a conduct.

It were eaſy to produce many teſtimonies from them in relation to the myſteries: but it may be ſufficient to mention what Clemens Alexandrinus ſays upon this ſubject, who was a man of learning and probity. In his exhortation to the Gentiles he inſiſts pretty largely upon the myſteries, and introduces it by declaring,

(*k*) Severe reflections have been made by ſeveral authors on the antient fathers for what they have ſaid againſt the myſteries. And yet that theſe were in many inſtances extremely corrupted, ſufficiently appears from many expreſs teſtimonies of the Pagan writers themſelves, notwithſtanding the ſtrong bias they had in their favour. Apuleius, in that work of his which was deſigned to recommend the Pagan religion and myſteries, repreſents the myſteries of Cybele and the Syrian goddeſs in an abominable light; and though he highly extols thoſe of Iſis, other Pagan writers give a bad account of them. Juvenal makes no ſcruple to call them

"Iſiacæ ſacraria lenæ." Satyr. vi. verſ. 488.

Our learned author himſelf mentions "the horrid abuſes and corruptions of the "myſteries," and owns that they "degenerated into an odious ſink of vice and "immorality." Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 190 and p. 196. marg. note. This was the ſtate they were generally in when the fathers ſpoke of them. And it is not much to be wondered at, if this created a ſtrong prejudice in their minds againſt the original deſign of the myſteries, and the perſons who firſt inſtituted them.

that

that he will give a true account of them, and will not be aſhamed to ſpeak plainly of thoſe things which they are not aſhamed to worſhip. He ſpeaks all along like one that was well acquainted with thoſe myſteries, who knew what the ſymbols of them were, and the things which were there repreſented and exhibited. And it appears from the accounts he gives, that the repreſentations made in the myſteries were agreeable to the fables of the poets and mythologiſts, concerning Jupiter, Ceres, Proſerpina, Bacchus, and other deities: that in the Eleuſinian ſacra, they celebrated the rape of Proſerpina, the lamentations of Ceres, her wanderings in queſt of her daughter, her congreſs with Jupiter, and ſupplications to him, with ſeveral other things which were both ridiculous and obſcene. He calls thoſe who brought thoſe myſteries from Egypt into Greece "the fathers of an execrable ſuperſtition; "who ſowed the ſeed of wickedneſs and corruption, σπέρμα "κακίας καὶ φθορᾶς, in human life: and ſays, the myſteries were "full of deluſion and portentous repreſentations, calculated to im-"poſe upon the people, ἀπάτης καὶ τερατείας ἐμπλεα (*l*)." He concludes his account of them with ſaying, "theſe are the myſte-"ries of atheiſtical men. I may rightly call thoſe atheiſts, who "are deſtitute of the knowledge of him who is truly God, and "moſt impudently worſhip a boy diſcerped, or torn in pieces by "the Titans, a woman lamenting, and the parts which modeſty "forbids to name." And he repeats it again, that they are ignorant of God, ἀγνοοῦσι τὸν θεὸν, and do not acknowledge that God who really is or exiſts (*m*).

(*l*) Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentes, p. 13, 14. Edit. Potter.

(*m*) Ibid. p. 19, 20.

This

This whole account of the Heathen myſteries given by Clemens is tranſcribed and approved by Euſebius, who was himſelf a very able judge. And he introduces it by obſerving, that Clemens knew theſe myſteries by his own experience (*n*). The account which Arnobius, who had been a learned Pagan, gives of the myſteries, particularly of the Eleuſinian myſteries, celebrated at Athens, is perfectly agreeable to that of Clemens (*o*).

Our learned and able advocate for the myſteries, to obviate the prejudice which might ariſe againſt them from the teſtimony of the antient Chriſtian writers, endeavours to account for the ill opinion they had of them, by obſerving, that "they bore a ſecret "grudge to the myſteries for their injurious treatment of Chriſti-"anity at its firſt appearance in the world. The Chriſtians, for "their contempt of the national deities, were deemed atheiſts by "the people, and were ſo branded by the myſtagogues, and ex-"poſed among the reſt in Tartarus in their ſolemn ſhews and re-"preſentations. This without doubt was what ſharpened the "fathers againſt the myſteries, and they were not always tender "in loading what they did not approve (*p*)." This is by no means a proper apology for the antient Chriſtians, if the charge they brought againſt the myſteries was falſe and calumnious. But the truth is, the very reaſon our learned author gives of the ſharpneſs which the antient Chriſtian writers expreſſed againſt the myſteries, is a proof that the deſign of them was not really

(*n*) Præp. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 61, et ſeq.

(*o*) Adverſ. Gentes, lib. v. p. 173, et ſeq. Lugd. Bat. 1651.

(*p*) Div. Leg. vol. i. p. 199. Edit. 4th.

ſuch

ſuch as he repreſents it to have been. For it appears from it, that the myſtagogues and managers of the myſteries did what they could to uphold the common polytheiſm and idolatry: and this was the true cauſe of their enmity to Chriſtianity. They repreſented the Chriſtians as atheiſts, becauſe they declared againſt the worſhip of the publicly adored deities. Whereas if the deſign of the ſecret doctrine of the greater myſteries had been to detect the error of the vulgar polytheiſm, and to teach the initiated that the popular deities were really no gods, the charge might have been retorted upon themſelves.

The laſt thing this celebrated writer has urged, to take off the force of the teſtimonies of the antient fathers of the church againſt the myſteries, and which he calls the ſtrange part of the ſtory, is, that after all they had ſaid againſt them "they ſhould ſo ſtudi-"ouſly and formally transfer the terms, phraſes, rites, ceremonies, "and diſcipline of theſe odious myſteries into our holy religion." To which purpoſe he has a long quotation from Caſaubon's 16th exercitation againſt the annals of Baronius (*q*). And he adds, "Sure then it was ſome more than ordinary veneration the people "had for theſe myſteries that could incline the fathers of the "church to ſo fatal a counſel." It will be allowed that the myſteries were had in great veneration among the Pagans, and that the fathers knew them to be ſo. And for that reaſon, if they had any notion that the deſign of the myſteries was what he repreſents it to have been, they would undoubtedly have taken advantage of that veneration for drawing the people off from the

(*q*) Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 200.

wor-

worſhip of the popular divinities, to the adoration of the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the univerſe. The veneration the people had for the myſteries affords not the leaſt preſumption, that the deſign of them was to detect and overthrow the popular polytheiſm, but rather the contrary. The Chriſtians certainly did not conſider them in this light: and yet becauſe of the veneration which was ſo generally paid them, they often applied to their own uſe the terms made uſe of in thoſe myſteries, the better to gain upon the Heathens, and to ſhew that Chriſtianity effected that in reality which the Pagan myſteries vainly pretended to.

I ſhall produce a remarkable paſſage of this kind from Clement of Alexandria, in the latter end of that very diſcourſe in which he ſhews he had the worſt opinion imaginable of the myſteries (*r*). He there ſpeaks of the Chriſtian religion in alluſion to the myſteries of Bacchus, and invites the Heathens to quit the one in order to embrace the other. He all along employs the terms which were made uſe of in thoſe rites and myſteries. He talks of celebrating "the venerable orgia of the word." To the hymns which were ſung at the myſteries, he oppoſes a hymn ſung to the great King of the univerſe. He ſpeaks of a Chriſtian's being initiated, and cries out, "O truly holy myſteries! being initiated "I am made holy—Ὦ τῶν ἁγίων ὡς ἀληθῶς μυ-ηρίων! ἅγιος γί-"νομαι μυούμενος." He ſays, "Ἱεροφάντει δε ὁ κύριος.—The Lord "himſelf acts the part of an hierophant," or interpreter of the myſteries. And he concludes, "Theſe are the Bacchanalia of "my myſteries: come then, and be initiated."

(*r*) Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentes, p. 92. Edit. Potter.

Can any man think that Clement makes this alluſion to the myſteries, becauſe he looked upon them to be really holy and uſeful things? The contrary plainly appears from this very paſſage, as well as from what he had ſaid before in the ſame diſcourſe. But as they were accounted holy, and were had in great veneration among the Pagans, and as the latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans repreſented them as the moſt perfect means of purifying the ſoul, he takes occaſion to ſhew that that venerable ſanctity and purity was really to be found in the Chriſtian religion, and its ſacred doctrines and rites, which they falſly attributed to their myſteries. Yet I agree with this learned writer in the judicious remark he makes, that the affecting to transfer the terms, phraſes, and ceremonies of the myſteries into our holy religion had a bad effect. The ſymbolizing in this and ſeveral other inſtances with the Pagans in their cuſtoms and ways of expreſſion, from a deſire, no doubt, of ſoftening their prejudices againſt Chriſtianity, contributed very early to vitiate and deprave that religion which, as he obſerves, a Pagan writer could not but ſee and acknowledge was "abſoluta et ſimplex," as it came out of the hands of its author (*s*).

It may perhaps be thought that I have inſiſted too largely upon the nature and deſign of the Pagan myeſtries. But it ſeemed to me to be neceſſary for ſetting the ſubject I am upon, eſpecially with regard to the civil theology of the Pagans, in a proper light. The learned Mr. Des Voeux ſeveral years ago in his life of Julian,

(*s*) Ammian. Marcell. Hiſt. lib. xxi. cap. 16. Div. Leg. ubi ſupra, p. 200.

vol. ii. p. 287, et ſeq. offered ſome judicious obſervations to ſhew that the myſteries were not intended to overturn the Pagan polytheiſm. But his deſign did not lead him to conſider this matter ſo fully as I have done. I ſhall only add, that in the remarks that are here made I have had a ſpecial regard to the fourth and laſt edition of the *Divine Legation*, in which there are ſeveral corrections and improvements made by the right reverend and learned author, which do not appear in the former editions of that celebrated work.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The philoſophical theology of the antient Pagans conſidered. High encomiums beſtowed upon the Pagan philoſophy. Yet it was of little uſe for leading the people into a right knowledge of God and religion, and for reclaiming them from their idolatry and polytheiſm. This ſhewn from ſeveral conſiderations. And firſt, if the philoſophers had been right in their own notions of religion, they could have but ſmall influence on the people, for want of a proper authority to enforce their inſtructions.

HAVING conſidered the poetical and fabulous theology of the Pagans which was taught by the mythologiſts, as alſo the civil theology which was countenanced and eſtabliſhed by the public authority, and ſhewn the deplorable ſtate of religion in the Gentile world with reſpect to both theſe, I ſhall now proceed to what Varro calls the phyſical or natural, and which, he ſays, was that of the philoſophers. It is the more neceſſary to conſider this, becauſe thoſe gentlemen who had denied the neceſſity or even the expediency of divine revelation, have ſpoken with the higheſt admiration of the antient Heathen philoſophers. That they held out a ſufficient light to mankind to guide them into the right knowledge of religious truth and duty, if they would but have attended to their inſtructions: that in them we have an evident proof of what human reaſon can do, when duly exerciſed

and improved: and that the world needed no better direction than what thoſe excellent perſons gave, as appears from their admirable writings, many of which are come down to us, and are fitted to convey the nobleſt notions of religion and the Divinity. And it muſt be acknowledged, that if we are to take the account which the philoſophers themſelves give of the excellency of their philoſophy, the greateſt matters might be expected from it for the inſtruction of mankind. The Stoics and others defined philoſophy to be "rerum divinarum humanarumque ſcientia— "the knowledge of things divine and human." Plato calls it the gift, Cicero not only ſo, but the invention of the gods (*t*). This laſt-mentioned excellent author, ſpeaking of philoſophy in his firſt book of laws, ſaith, that "nothing more excellent, more beauti- "ful, more uſeful, and profitable, was ever given by the immortal "gods for the benefit of human life.—Nihil a diis immortalibus "uberius, nihil florentius, nihil præſtabilius hominum vitæ da- "tum eſt (*u*)." Plato in his Timæus carries it farther: for he ſays not only that "no greater good ever was given, but ever will "be given by the favour and bounty of the gods to the human "race." Cicero tranſlates that paſſage of Plato thus: "Quo "bono nullum optabilius, nullum præſtantius, neque datum eſt "immortalium deorum conceſſu atque munere, neque da- "bitur (*x*)."

(*t*) Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. i. cap. 26. p. 63. Edit. Davis, 4to.

(*u*) De Leg. lib. i. cap. 22. p. 68. Edit. Davis, 2d.

(*x*) Fragm. de Univerſo. cap. 14.

And

And as they were ſenſible of the importance and neceſſity of knowing and worſhipping the Deity, ſo they repreſented the inſtructing men in this to be one principal buſineſs of philoſophy. "It hath inſtructed us," ſaith Cicero, "in the firſt place in what "relates to the worſhip of the gods, and next in juſtice towards "men, which conſiſteth in the offices of human ſociety, and "hath alſo formed us to modeſty and true greatneſs of mind." He adds, that "it hath diſpelled darkneſs from our minds, that "we might be enabled to behold all things, things above and "things below, the firſt, middle, and laſt things.—Hæc nos pri-"mùm ad illorum [deorum] cultum, deinde ad jus hominum, "quod ſitum eſt in generis humani ſocietate, tum ad modeſtiam, "magnitudinemque animi erudivit: eademque ab animo tan-"quàm ab oculis caliginem diſpulit, ut omnia ſupera, infera, "prima, ultima, media videremus (*y*)." It is ſcarce poſſible to carry the encomium higher. If this be ſo, philoſophy muſt certainly be ſufficient to inſtruct us in every thing that it is proper for us to know. We need no other nor better guide. To the ſame purpoſe Seneca ſaith, that "it is the proper work of philoſophy to "find out the truth both in divine and human things.—Hujus opus "unum eſt in divinis humaniſque verum invenire (*z*)." Epictetus repreſents it as eſſential to true piety to form right opinions concerning the gods, and intimates that this is what philoſophy teacheth us (*a*). Plutarch in his tract De liberis educand. after having

(*y*) Tuſcul. Diſput. ubi ſupra, p. 64.

(*z*) Sen. Epiſt. 90.

(*a*) Epictet. Enchir. cap. 32. Edit. Upton, compared with Diſſert. lib. ii. cap. 14. ſect. 2.

obſerved,

obſerved, that there is one only art capable of curing the diſeaſes of the mind, and that this is philoſophy, particularly mentions it as one of its principal advantages, that by the aſſiſtance of philoſophy we know how to demean ourſelves towards the gods, our parents, &c. that is, as he explains it, to worſhip the gods, to honour our parents, &c.

Let us therefore particularly enquire, whether and how far the philoſophers, with all the aids of human learning and ſtrength of genius, were of uſe to inſtruct mankind in the right knowledge of God and religion.

And I think, allowing all that can be reaſonably ſaid in their favour, it muſt be acknowledged, that in fact they were of little ſervice for recovering the nations from the groſs ſuperſtitions and idolatries into which they were fallen, to the true knowledge and worſhip of the Deity. And ſeveral conſiderations may be offered to ſhew that this was a work which, as things were circumſtanced, they were not fitted to accompliſh.

And firſt, it is to be obſerved, that if we ſhould ſuppoſe the philoſophers to have been never ſo right in their own notions, they had little influence on the people, for want of a proper authority to enforce their inſtructions. The people for the moſt part thought themſelves very little concerned in what the philoſophers taught in their ſchools. They looked upon their philoſophical diſquiſitions and diſputations to be the exerciſes of wit and genius, done rather for an oſtentation of their parts and learning, than for

any

any emolument to the public. But eſpecially they paid little attention to them in religious matters relating to the gods and their worſhip. The philoſophers were not the authorized miniſters of religion. The people were governed by the religion of the ſtate, which was adminiſtered by the prieſts, to which the philoſophers themſelves conformed, and urged the people to conform. It has been already obſerved from Varro, that as to what related to the gods, the people were more inclined to follow the poets than the philoſophers. Nor were the great men of the ſtate, many of whom were alſo prieſts, willing that the people ſhould be under the direction of the philoſophers in matters of religion. That eminent ſtateſman and pontiff Scævola before-mentioned, ſpeaking of the philoſophic theology, or doctrine of the gods, ſaith, "that it was not proper for cities, becauſe it had ſome things in "it needleſs and ſuperfluous, and ſome things which it may be "hurtful to the people to know.—Secundum genus [quod eſt "traditum a philoſophis] non congruit civitatibus, quod habent "aliqua ſupervacua, aliqua etiam quæ obſit populo noſſe (*b*)." And Varro, ſpeaking of what the philoſophers diſputed concerning the gods, was for confining their diſputes and ſpeculations concerning the gods within the walls of the ſchools, and not producing them to the public, as being what the people could not bear. "Quæ faciliùs inter parietes in ſchola, quàm extra in foro "ferre poſſunt aures." And indeed the diſputes among the philoſophers relating to the gods, which he there mentions, were of ſuch a kind, that the publiſhing them among the people would

(*b*) Apud Auguſt. De Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 7. p. 84.

rather

rather have confounded than inſtructed them (*c*). Beſides there was ſuch a diſagreement among them in their opinions, that if the people had been for governing themſelves abſolutely by their authority, they would have been at a loſs whom to follow: of which we need no better proof than the account Cicero gives of them in his celebrated books De naturâ Deorum. They left them therefore for the moſt part to diſpute about theſe things in their ſchools, without troubling themſelves much about their opinions or arguments. And as for the politicians and civil magiſtrates, Cotta, no doubt, ſpoke their ſenſe, when he declared, that "in matters of religion he choſe to follow Ti. Coruncanius, "P. Scipio, P. Scævola, who were chief pontiffs, not Zeno, or "Cleanthes, or Chryſippus: and that he ſet a higher value upon "what C. Lælius, the augur, ſaid in his noble oration on reli-"gion, than upon the doctrines of any of the principal Stoics.— "Cum de religione agitur Ti. Coruncanium, P. Scipionem, et "P. Scævolam, pontifices maximos, non Zenonem, aut Clean-"them, aut Chryſippum ſequor: habeoque C. Lælium augurem, "eundemque ſapientem, quem potiùs audiam, dicentem de re-"ligione in illâ oratione nobili, quàm quenquam principem "Stoicorum (*d*)."

(*c*) Apud Auguſtin. De Civit. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 5. p. 117. The diſputes he there refers to are thus expreſſed by him: "Dii qui ſint, ubi, quod genus, quale, "quonam tempore, an ab æterno fuerint, an ex igne ſint, ut Heraclitus, an ex "numeris, ut Pythagoras, an ex atomis, ut Epicurus."

(*d*) Concerning this oration of Lælius, and the occaſion of it, which was wholly deſigned for defending the public antient religion of the Romans, ſee Davis's note on this paſſage De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 2. p. 261.

And as the people gave little attention to the opinions of the philoſophers, ſo the philoſophers deſpiſed the people, as incapable of receiving and profiting by their inſtructions. Plato obſerves, that "thoſe who philoſophize are neceſſarily blamed or reproached "ed by the multitude, as alſo by thoſe who deſire to pleaſe "them.—Τὸς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἀνάγκη ψέγεσθαι ὑπ' αὐτῶν (*e*)." And again, that "the generality of men were unfavourably affected "towards philoſophy.—Χαλεπῶς πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν τὸς πόλλους διακεῖσθαι (*f*)." There is a remarkable paſſage of Cicero to the ſame purpoſe, in which he ſays, "that philoſophy is content "with a few judges: that it deſignedly ſhuns the multitude, and "is by them ſuſpected and diſliked: ſo that if any man ſhould "ſet himſelf to vilify all philoſophy, he might do it with the ap"probation and applauſe of the people.—Eſt philoſophia paucis "contenta judicibus, multitudinem conſultò fugiens, eique ipſi "ſuſpecta et inviſa: ut vel ſiquis univerſam velit vituperare, ſe"cundo id populo facere poſſit (*g*)."

It appears then that the people had little to do with the philoſophers, or the philoſophers with the people. Whilſt they could not pretend to any divine authority to enforce their dictates, their moſt plauſible ſpeculations had little weight. Whereas if they had come in the name and by the authority of God himſelf, and had been able to produce proper credentials of their Divine miſ-

(*e*) Plato Repub. lib. vi. oper. p. 473. B. Ficin. Lugd. 1590.

(*f*) Ibid. p. 475. F.

(*g*) Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. I. cap. i. p. 126. Edit. Davis, 4to. et ibid. lib. v. cap. ii. p. 344.

ſion, this would have engaged and commanded the attention of the people in a quite different manner, than their philoſophical reaſonings, to which other arguments and reaſonings were oppoſed by philoſophers of great name. What Lactantius ſaith of the precepts of the philoſophers may be equally applied to their doctrines. After having obſerved that the philoſophers have many things like to what we are taught in Scripture, and frequently come near the truth, he adds, that " theſe their precepts have no " weight, becauſe they are human, and need a greater authority, " even a divine one. No man therefore believes them, becauſe " he that hears them looks upon him that gives thoſe precepts to " be a man as well as himſelf—Nihil ponderis habent iſta præ- " cepta quia ſunt humana, et auctoritate majori, id eſt, divinâ " illa carent. Nemo igitur credit, quia tam ſe hominem putat " eſſe qui audit, quàm eſt ille qui præcipit (*b*)." The philoſophers themſelves were ſenſible of this: and therefore as they repreſent their philoſophy to be the gift and invention of the gods, ſo ſometimes they expreſs themſelves as if they had a mind to be looked upon as inſpired perſons. Plato ſpeaking of thoſe whoſe minds are poſſeſſed with an unfeigned love of philoſophy, repreſents this as proceeding from a kind of divine inſpiration. " Ἐκ " τίνος θείας ἐπιπνοίας (*i*)." And he declares concerning his own diſcourſes, that they ſeemed to him to be delivered " not with- " out a kind of inſpiration from the gods.—οὐκ ἄνευ τίνος ἐπιπνοίας " θεῶν (*k*). He frequently declares, that all wiſdom comes from

(*b*) Lact. Divin. Inſtit. lib. iii. cap. 27. p. 330. Edit. var. Lugd. Bat.

(*i*) Plato Repub. lib. vi. oper. p. 475. E. Edit. Lugd.

(*k*) Ibid. p. 636. G.

God,

God, and has many paſſages which tend to ſhew the neceſſity of a divine inſtruction. Celſus is for ſending men to the poets, wiſe men, and philoſophers, as inſpired by a divine afflatus: and particularly he mentions Orpheus as a man confeſſedly or without doubt ὁμολογεμένως, inſpired by a holy ſpirit (*l*); though, as Origen obſerves, Orpheus wrote more impious fables concerning the gods than Homer himſelf. The latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, after Chriſtianity appeared, pretended to frequent impulſes, revelations, inſpirations, and divine communications, which proceeded from a conviction that philoſophy, as it ſignifies true wiſdom, or the knowledge of divine things, ought to proceed from God, in order to its having a proper authority on the minds of men: but as they were not able to produce ſolid proofs of their divine miſſion, their philoſophy and pretences fell together: whilſt the Chriſtian religion, which in reality had its original from heaven, though deſtitute of all worldly advantages, yet being attended with the moſt convincing evidences of a divine authority, effected that which philoſophy could never have accompliſhed, in ſubverting that ſyſtem of Pagan polytheiſm and idolatry, which had the preſcription of many ages to plead, and which ſeemed ſo firmly eſtabliſhed, that no merely human wiſdom or power was able to overturn it.

(*l*) Origen. cont. Celſ. lib. vii. p. 359, et ibid. p. 367.

CHAP. XI.

The affected obſcurity of the Pagan philoſophers another cauſe which rendered them unfit to inſtruct the people in religion. Inſtead of clearly explaining their ſentiments on the moſt important ſubjects, they carefully concealed them from the vulgar. To which it may be added, that ſome of them uſed their utmoſt efforts to deſtroy all certainty and evidence, and to unſettle men's minds as to the belief of the fundamental principles of all religion: and even the beſt and greateſt of them acknowledged the darkneſs and uncertainty they were under, eſpecially in divine matters.

ANOTHER obſervation which is proper to be made concerning the antient philoſophers is, that ſome of the moſt eminent amongſt them, in diſcourſing of the principles of their philoſophy, eſpecially when they treated of religion and divine things, involved their ſentiments in great obſcurity, and were ſo far from intending them for general uſe, that they carefully concealed them from the people.

The Egyptians, whoſe wiſdom was ſo much admired and celebrated among the antients, were particularly remarkable for this. They had, beſides their popular theology, another which they kept ſecret, and only communicated to a few ſelect perſons, whom they thought fit to be intruſted with it. Clement of Alexandria, who him-

himſelf lived in Egypt, obſerves, that " the Egyptians did not " expoſe their religous myſteries promiſcuouſly to all; nor did " they communicate the knowledge of divine things to the " people, but to thoſe only who were to ſucceed to the king- " dom, and to thoſe of the prieſts whom they judged beſt quali- " fied for it by their birth and extraction, by their education " and their learning (*m*)." Plutarch ſays the ſame thing in his treatiſe De Iſid. et Oſir. (*n*) where he alſo obſerves, that they were wont to place ſphynxes before their temples, to ſignify that their theology had an ænigmatical meaning in it. And Origen informs us, that not only the Egyptians, but the Perſians, Syrians, Indians, and other nations, had a ſecret theology diſtinct from the common, and known only to their wiſe men; whilſt the " ἰδιῶται " —the vulgar and unlearned," hearing only certain fables which they knew not the meaning of, looked no farther than the outward ſymbols (*o*). As to the Greeks, Orpheus and the eldeſt poets and

(*m*) Clem. Alex. Strom. lib v. p. 670. Edit. Potter.

(*n*) Plut. Oper. tom. ii. p. 254.

(*o*) Orig. cont. Celſ. lib. i. p. 11. We are told alſo, that the antient Chineſe philoſophers, who were the founders of the ſect of the learned, had their ſymbols and hieroglyphics; and that the books which contain the ſpeculative part of the Chineſe doctrine are full of thoſe ſymbols, and treat of the myſteries, and efficient cauſes of numbers. It is alſo obſerved concerning the three principal ſects of China, that they have two ſeveral ſorts of doctrines; one private, which they look upon as true, and is only underſtood by the learned, and profeſſed by them under the veil of ſymbols and figures; the other vulgar and popular, which by their learned men is looked upon as falſe in the ſuperficial ſound of the words. This they make uſe of for government, and in their civil worſhip, for inclining the people to good, and deterring them from evil. See F. Longobardi's treatiſe in Navarette's Account of the empire of China, in Churchill's Collection of Travels, &c. vol. i. p. 174.

philo-

philoſophers, who derived much of their learning and philoſophy from Egypt, did alſo, like the Egyptians, wrap up their doctrines of divine things in fables; whereby they came in time to be loſt, or greatly depraved. Pythagoras to fables ſubſtituted numbers and obſcure ſymbols, which were explained only to his diſciples, and not to them till after a tedious preparation. Nor was the meaning of them long preſerved and underſtood even among thoſe of his own ſect. A remarkable inſtance of which we have in the different explications given by them of the Tetractys, on which they, after Pythagoras, laid ſo great a ſtreſs. Concerning which ſee Burnet's Archæolog. lib. i. cap. 11. where he gives a long catalogue of antients and moderns, who were divided about the meaning of the Tetractys. And certain it is, that a great obſcurity reigned all along in the Pythagoric ſchool. Socrates was the firſt among the philoſophers, and almoſt the only one, who uſed a plain and familiar manner of inſtruction. But then he treated chiefly of things of a moral and civil nature, and meddled very little with the ſpeculations of the philoſophers about the gods, and the nature of things; but declined and diſcouraged ſuch enquiries. Xenophon in an epiſtle to Æſchines, cited by Euſebius, blames thoſe who, quitting the plain and ſimple philoſophy of Socrates, were in love with Egypt, and the τερατώδης σοφία, the *portentous wiſdom* of Pythagoras. This, as Euſebius obſerves, was intended againſt Plato (*p*). And indeed the greateſt admirers of that famous philoſopher muſt own that he is often obſcure, and treats his ſubject, eſpecially when he is diſcourſing on divine things, in a manner no way adapted to the capacity of the people. Hence

(*p*) Præpar. Evangel. lib. xiv. cap. 12. p. 741.

the ridicule caſt upon him by the comic poet Amphys, mentioned by Laertius. " The good whatever it is that you expect to get " from this, I underſtand leſs than I do Plato's good (*q*)." And the reaſon is given by Alcinous, in his account of Plato's philoſophy, chap. 27. " That which is worthy of honour, ſuch as the " Supreme Good, he [Plato] conceived not eaſy to be found, " and if found not ſafe to be declared (*r*)." Or, as Plato himſelf expreſſes it, " τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς εὑρεῖν τὸ " ἔργον, καὶ εὑρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν (*s*).—It is a difficult " matter to find out the Maker and Parent of the univerſe, and " when you have found him to declare him to all is impoſſible." Or, as Cicero gives the ſenſe, " to declare him to the vulgar is " unlawful.—Indicare in vulgus nefas." Ficinus, in his argument on Plato's ſeventh book of laws, taking notice of Plato's ſaying, that the things he had ſaid hitherto ſeemed to him to be like poetry, and not without a kind of inſpiration from the gods, obſerves upon it, that " by this he ſignifies, that all his writings " to that time, that is, to his old age, were in ſome ſort divinely " inſpired, and diſpoſed in a poetical figurative manner, and for " the moſt part to be explained allegorically. And therefore in " his epiſtles he ſays, that his true meaning was comprehended " by none, or by a very few, and that with difficulty, by a kind " of prophetic ſagacity. In his ſignificat omnia ejus ſcripta in " eam uſque diem, id eſt ſenium, eſſe quodammodo divinitùs in- " ſpirata, atque poeticâ figurâ diſpoſita, ut ſint allegoricè plurimùm

(*q*) Diog. Laert. lib. iii. ſegm. 27.

(*r*) See Stanley's Hiſtory of Philoſophy. p. 192.

(*s*) Plat. Oper. p. 636. G. Edit. Lugd.

" ex-

" exponenda. Ob id, in epiſtolis ait mentem quam vel a nullo, " vel a quàm pauciſſimis, et vix tandem ex quâdam vaticinii ſa- " gacitate poſſe comprehendi (*t*)." Ficinus probably had an eye to a paſſage in Plato's epiſtle to Dion's friends, in which he ſays, that none of thoſe who thought they knew the things which were the ſubjects of his meditations rightly underſtood them: nor had he ever written, nor would write of them, ſo as to explain them clearly to others: and that if it had ſeemed to him proper to explain them in word or writing to the vulgar, he could not have done a more excellent thing in life than to produce to the public what was uſeful to mankind, and to bring nature into a clear and open light: but that he thought the attempting to publiſh theſe things would not be of uſe to men, a very few excepted, who are able of themſelves to find out and improve the hints which are given them (*u*). Theſe things which he did not think fit to explain, related probably to his ſublimer ſpeculations concerning the Supreme God, the chiefeſt Good. And I think from the account Plato himſelf gives of his own writings, we cannot well be ſure at this diſtance that we hit upon his true meaning, and therefore ought not lay any great ſtreſs upon what we imagine to be his notions. Origen, who had a great eſteem for Plato, obſerves, that very few profited by his beautiful and accurate diſcourſes, and that his works were only in the hands of the learned (*x*). The latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, and others, affect a myſtical theology: and though there are ex-

(*t*) Plato Oper. p. 856, 857.

(*u*) Ibid. p. 719. A. B.

(*x*) Orig. cont. Celſum, lib. vi. in initio, p. 275.

cellent

cellent things in their writings, they are no way accommodated to the uſe of the people. Now whatever was the cauſe of this obſcurity in ſome of the moſt eminent Pagan philoſophers, whether it was owing to their not having had juſt and clear ideas themſelves of theſe matters, or to a fear of their being accounted enemies to the popular religion, or to their being of opinion that the people were not fitted to receive theſe diſcoveries, but would make a wrong uſe of them; to which ſoever of theſe cauſes this obſcurity was owing (and it is not improbable that all theſe cauſes contributed to it) it ſhews they were not well qualified to lead the people into the right knowledge of religion, nor could their inſtructions be of general uſe. But it is the great advantage and glory of the Chriſtian revelation, that as it was deſigned to promote the ſalvation of all, ſo it was publiſhed clearly and openly to the people, that it might be of univerſal benefit, for inſtructing men in the right knowledge of God and religion. Some learned and ingenious perſons have indeed endeavoured to apologize for Plato and the other philoſophers, who kept their doctrines ſecret from the people, by obſerving, that the Divine Author of our religion made the ſame diſtinction among his hearers, and ſpoke darkly to the people in parables (*y*), what he afterwards explained fully to his diſciples, Mark iv. 34. But it ſhould be conſidered, that the parables there referred to, particularly relate to the different reception his Goſpel would meet with among thoſe to whom it ſhould be publiſhed, the progreſs it would make in the world, and other things of that kind; which it was not as yet proper openly to declare. He therefore

(*y*) See Geddes's Eſſay on the Compoſition of the Antients, p. 176, 177.

explained them privately to his diſciples, with an intention however that they ſhould publiſh them in the fitteſt ſeaſon. And accordingly at that very time he ſaid to his diſciples, that their "candle" was not to be "put under a buſhel, but in a candle-"ſtick," that it might give light to all. "For there is nothing "hid which ſhall not be manifeſted: neither was any thing "ſecret, but that it ſhould come abroad." Mark iv. 21, 22. Or, as he elſewhere expreſſeth it, "there is nothing covered that ſhall "not be revealed, and hid that ſhall not be known. What I tell "you in darkneſs, that ſpeak ye in light, and what ye hear in "the ear, that ſpeak ye upon the houſe tops." Matt. x. 26, 27. Thoſe very parables, with his expoſitions of them, were afterwards publiſhed to the world. And he commiſſioned his apoſtles to "go into all the world," and "preach the Goſpel to every crea-"ture;" or, as it is elſewhere expreſſed, "to diſciple all nations, "teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever he had com-"manded them (*z*). What St. Paul ſaith of himſelf was true of all the apoſtles, when he tells thoſe among whom he preached, that he "had not ſhunned to declare unto them all the counſel of "God (*a*)." Accordingly the people were every where openly inſtructed in the knowledge of the only true God, his glorious attributes and perfections, the worſhip due to him, the vanity of polytheiſm and idolatry, the creation of the world, the methods of our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt, the gracious terms of the new covenant, and its exceeding great and precious promiſes, the extent of the duty required of us in the divine law, the reſurrection

(*z*) Mark xvi. 15. Matt. xxviii. 20.

(*a*) Acts xx. 27.

of

of the dead, a future judgment, and the rewards and puniſhments of the world to come. Hence it was that, as is frequently obſerved by the antient Chriſtian writers, many even of the common ſort of Chriſtians, who were ſtrangers to learning and philoſophy, knew more of theſe things, points of the higheſt importance to mankind, than the wiſe men and philoſophers among the Pagans.

This leads to a third conſideration, which ſhews, that the philoſophers were not well fitted to inſtruct mankind in the right knowledge of God and religion: and that is, the darkneſs and uncertainty they were under in matters of the greateſt conſequence: and that it appears from their own acknowledgments, that they had nothing to offer, eſpecially in relation to divine things, which could be ſafely depended upon.

It is well known, that ſome of the moſt ſubtil of the antient philoſophers abſolutely denied all certainty and evidence. In conſequence of this they ſet themſelves, with all the force of their wit and reaſon, to weaken and ſhake the main principles of all religion, and even to invalidate the proofs of the exiſtence of God: though for their own ſafety they profeſſed a great regard for the public religion, and the legal and popular deities. Such were the ſeveral kinds of Sceptics, of whom the Pyrrhonians were the moſt eminent. And not very different from theſe were thoſe of the New Academy, which was formed by Arceſilas, farther improved by Carneades, and ſupported with great learning and eloquence by Cicero. Though the Academics held, that ſome

things were more probable than others, in which they differed from the Pyrrhonians, who held that all things are alike doubtful and indifferent, yet they denied that there is any thing which can be certainly known or underſtood, and that therefore we ought not to affirm any thing, but always to with-hold our aſſent (*b*). Epictetus juſtly expoſes the philoſophy and manner of reaſoning of the Sceptics and Academics, as not only abſurd and ridiculous, but of pernicious conſequence to religion and good

(*b*) A celebrated author, in his Life of Cicero, gives it as his opinion, that there was a real difference between the New Academy and the Sceptics. That the latter maintained a perfect neutrality towards all opinions as equally uncertain: But the Academics admitted a probable in things, though they denied that a certainty was to be attained to. He cites a paſſage from Cicero De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 5. where he ſays, "There are many things probable, which, though not perfectly "comprehended, yet on account of their ſpecious appearance are ſufficient to go-"vern the life of a wiſe man.—Multa eſſe probabilia quæ quanquàm non perci-"perentur, tamen quia viſum haberent quendam inſignem et inluſtrem, his ſapien-"tis vita regeretur." And again in the fourth book of his Academic Queſtions, cap. 3. he ſaith, "We have many probabilities which we readily embrace, but "dare not affirm.—Nos probabilia multa habemus, quæ ſequi facilè, affirmare vix "poſſumus*". Yet in the words immediately preceding the former of theſe paſſages, Cicero gives it as the opinion of the Academics, that "all truths have ſome "falſhoods adjoined to them, ſo very like, that there is no certain mark to deter-"mine our judgment or aſſent.—Omnibus veris falſa quædam adjuncta eſſe, tantâ "ſimilitudine, ut in iis nulla inſit certa judicandi et adſentiendi nota:" Which ſeems to me to come in effect to the ſceptical principle. The preſent learned Biſhop of Glouceſter has offered ſeveral reaſons to ſhew, that the Middle and New Academy were in reality the ſame, and that they both were as real Sceptics, as that ſect which was ſo denominated. For though they pretended their end was to find the probable, they were for keeping the mind in an eternal ſuſpence, and continued going on, diſputing againſt every thing, without ever finding the probable to determine their judgments. See Div. Leg. of Moſes, &c. vol. ii. p. 117, 118. 4th Ed.

Middleton's Life of Cicero, vol. ii. p. 599, 600. Dubl. Edition.

manners;

manners; and repreſents them as the moſt incorrigible of all men, and the moſt unfit to be reaſoned with (*c*).

But it may not be improper to obſerve on this occaſion, that beſides the profeſſed Sceptics and the Academics, there were many others of the philoſophers who made loud complaints of the uncertainty of human knowledge. Seneca in his 88th epiſtle produces a long catalogue of the antients, who ſaid that nothing was to be known. And the learned Gataker has collected many teſtimonies to this purpoſe in his Annotations on Marcus Antoninus, p. 198. et ſeq. It was a celebrated ſaying of Socrates, "that he "knew this only, that he knew nothing." Cicero obſerves at the latter end of his firſt book of Academic Queſtions, that the obſcurity of things had brought Socrates to a confeſſion of his ignorance, as alſo Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and almoſt all the antients: "omnes pænè veteres (*d*)." And in his ſecond book of Academic Queſtions he ſaith, that "all know-"ledge is obſtructed and encumbered with many difficulties, "and that there is that obſcurity in the things themſelves, and "that weakneſs in our own judgments, that it was not without "reaſon that the moſt learned men, and thoſe of the greateſt an-"tiquity, deſpaired of being able to find out that which they de-"ſired to know.—Omnis cognitio multis eſt obſtructa difficultati-"bus, eaque in eſt, et in ipſis rebus obſcuritas, et in judiciis

(*c*) Epict. Diſſert. lib. i. cap. 5. et lib. ii. cap. 20. ſect. 6.

(*d*) Academ. Queſt. lib. i. cap. 12.

"noſtris

" noſtris infirmitas, ut non ſine cauſâ, et doctiſſimi et antiquiſſi-
" mi invenire ſe poſſe quod cuperent, diffiſi ſint (*e*)."

Eſpecially there were many of them that acknowledged their ignorance in divine matters. Meliſſus the Samian, a diſciple of Parmenides, who was much honoured and admired by his countrymen, ſaid, as Laertius informs us, that " we ought not to " aſſert any thing concerning the gods; for we have no know-" ledge of them (*f*)." Plato himſelf has many things concerning the imperfection and uncertainty of human knowledge in divine matters. In his Epinomis, ſpeaking of the things relating to religion and the worſhip of the gods, he ſaith, " that it is not " poſſible for mortal nature to know any thing certain concern-" ing ſuch things as theſe.—ὥσπερ οὐδ' ὂν δυνατὸν εἰδέναι τῇ θνητῇ " φύσει τῶν τοιούτων περι (*g*)." To the ſame purpoſe in his fourth Republic, he ſaith, " theſe are things we do not know:" and therefore he adviſes to have recourſe to the patron god, as the proper inſtructor and guide (*h*). In his famous allegory of the philoſophic cave, he ſuppoſes that at preſent men are as it were bound down with fetters in a ſubterraneous cave, with their backs to the light, and unable to turn their heads towards it: and that till theſe fetters are looſed and removed, they are hindered from diſcerning the truth and ſubſtance of things, and only ſee the phantoms and ſhadows of them, which they conceive to be the

(*e*) Academ. Queſt. lib. iv. cap. 3.

(*f*) Laert. lib. ix. ſegm. 24.

(*g*) Plato Oper. p. 702. E. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

(*h*) Ibid. p. 448. B, C.

things

things themſelves: but cannot raiſe their contemplations to the τὸ ὄν and τὸ ἀγαθὸν, that which really is, or that which is good itſelf (*i*).

Ariſtotle diſapproved and argued ſtrongly againſt thoſe who pretended that we cannot know or be certain of any thing. He ſaid, he could not think, that what they called philoſophy ought to have that name given it, ſince it took away the very principles of philoſophizing (*k*). Yet he makes this remarkable acknowledgment, that "as the eyes of batts are to the brightneſs of the "day-light, ſo alſo is the underſtanding of our ſouls towards "thoſe things which are by nature the moſt manifeſt of all.— "ὥσπερ γὰρ αἱ τὰ τῶν νυκτερίδων ὄμματα πρὸς τὸ φέγγος ἔχει τὸ "καθ' ἡμέραν, οὕτως καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὰ τῇ φύσει "φανερώτατα (*l*)."

The Stoics were of all the philoſophers thoſe who made the higheſt pretenſions to certainty and evidence, and were the conſtant oppoſers of the Academics. They would not allow any doubtfulneſs of opinion in their wiſe man, but that he had a clear and certain comprehenſion of things: yet they could not help ſometimes talking in a different ſtrain. Marcus Antoninus, tho' a ſtrict Stoic, obſerves, that "the natures of things are ſo covered "up from us, that to many philoſophers, and thoſe no mean "ones, all things ſeem uncertain and incomprehenſible." He

(*i*) See the 7th book of his Republic, in the beginning.

(*k*) Ariſt. de Philoſ. lib. viii. ap. Euſeb. Præp. Evang. lib. xiv. cap. 18. p. 763.

(*l*) Ariſt. Metaphyſ. lib. ii. cap. 1.

adds, that " the Stoics themſelves own it to be very difficult to " comprehend any thing certainly. All our judgments are fallible." So it is in the Glaſgow tranſlation of Antoninus. In the original it runs thus, " πᾶσα ἡ ἡμετέρα συγκατάθεσις μετάπλωτη;" which Gataker renders, " omnis aſſenſus noſter eſt labilis et mutabilis.— " Every aſſent of ours is liable to miſtake and change (*m*)". Diodorus Siculus charges the Greek philoſophy in general as leading men into perpetual doubts. He obſerves, that they were continually innovating in the moſt conſiderable doctrines, and by perpetually contradicting one another made their diſciples dubious; ſo that their minds, as long as they lived, were in ſuſpence, neither could they firmly believe any thing (*n*). It may therefore be affirmed, that philoſophy, eſpecially as it was managed among the Greeks, tended rather to unſettle men's notions in religion, and to unhinge ſome of the main principles conveyed by antient tradition, than to ſet the people right, and rectify their errors in the moſt important points of religious faith and practice. This obſervation ſhews how little the philoſophers were to be depended upon: ſince ſome of the greateſt and beſt of them confeſſed on ſeveral occaſions, that they had not any thing certain to offer for the inſtruction of mankind, eſpecially in things relating to religion and the Deity. But ſince at other times they highly extolled philoſophy as the beſt guide to lead men into the knowledge of things human and divine, it will be proper diſtinctly to examine the truth and juſtice of their pretenſions.

(*m*) Marc Anton. lib. v. ſ. 10.

(*n*) Stanley's Hiſt. Philoſ. p. 1034. Edit. 2d.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The fourth general conſideration. The philoſophers unfit to inſtruct the people in religion, becauſe they themſelves were for the moſt part very wrong in their own notions of the Divinity. They were the great corrupters of the antient tradition relating to the one true God and the creation of the world. Many of thoſe who profeſſed to ſearch into the origin of the world, and the formation of things, endeavoured to account for it without the interpoſition of a Deity. The opinions of thoſe philoſophers who were of a nobler kind conſidered. It is ſhewn, that they were chargeable with great defects, and no way proper to reclaim the nations from their idolatry and polytheiſm.

THE conſiderations which have been already offered tend to ſhew how little was to be expected from the philoſophers, for inſtructing the people in a right knowledge of God and religion. But this will ſtill more convincingly appear, if we conſider what wrong notions they themſelves entertained of the Deity, and the confuſion and abſurdity of their opinions, even with reſpect to the moſt important article of all, Religion. Juſtin Martyr informs us, that when the Pagans were preſſed with the fables of the poets concerning the gods, they were wont to allege their wiſe men and philoſophers, and had recourſe to them as a ſtrong wall or bulwark; though he obſerves, that their opinions of the

philoſophers were more ridiculous than even the theology of the poets. And indeed there were many of them to whom this cenſure might juſtly be applied.

Cicero, than whom no man was better acquainted with the tenets of the antient philoſophers, or an abler judge of them, and who was himſelf, as appears from the paſſages above produced from him, a great admirer of philoſophy, hath written a celebrated treatiſe concerning the nature of the gods. He begins with obſerving the great importance of the queſtion, and that it was neceſſary to the right ordering of religion, "ad moderandam "religionem neceſſaria;" and then immediately takes notice of the prodigious diverſity of ſentiments among the moſt learned philoſophers on this ſubject, which, he ſays, were ſo many and various, that it was no eaſy matter to enumerate them. And the account he gives of them is ſuch, as we, who have had the advantage of clearer diſcoveries of the Deity by the light of Divine Revelation, cannot read without concern and aſtoniſhment. Nor can any thing, in my opinion, exhibit a more melancholy proof of the weakneſs of human reaſon, when left to it ſelf, and truſting to its own force in matters of religion. He gives a long liſt of the moſt celebrated names in the Pagan world, eſpecially among the Greek philoſophers, men who were moſt admired for the depth of their learning, or for the fineneſs of their genius (*o*). I ſhall

(*o*) He mentions Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Alcmæon, Crotoniates, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Diogenes Apolloniata, Antiſthenes, Xenocrates, Heraclides Ponticus, Strato, Plato, Xenophon, Speuſippus, Ariſtotle, Theophraſtus, Zeno, Chryſippus.

not enter into a detail of their ſentiments, for which I refer to the book itſelf, which is generally known. He does not propoſe to ſpeak of thoſe who ſaid there were no gods, as Diagoras Melius and Theodorus Cyrenaicus; or who doubted whether there were any, as Protagoras. All thoſe whom he mentions profeſſed to acknowledge a god or gods of one kind or another; but as to the nature of the deity or deities, there was a ſtrange confuſion and diverſity in their notions. And almoſt all of them were ſuch as every rational deiſt in our days, who declares himſelf an admirer of natural religion, will readily pronounce to be abſurd and contrary to reaſon.

The antient philoſophers may be diſtributed into two principal ranks or claſſes. The one is, of thoſe who excluded a Divine mind or underſtanding from any concern in the formation of the univerſe. The other is, of thoſe who attributed the frame and order of things to a moſt wiſe, powerful, and benign Cauſe and Author.

Among the former may be reckoned moſt of thoſe who firſt applied themſelves to the ſtudy of philoſophy in Greece, and to ſearch into the nature of things. Ariſtotle expreſly tells us, that moſt of thoſe who firſt philoſophized "τῶν πρώτων φιλοσοφήσαντων οἱ πλεῖστοι—ſeeing the ſubſtance of matter to remain "always the ſame, and that it was altered only in its qualities, "made matter to be the only principle, or the firſt cauſe of all "things that exiſt (*p*)." And the ſame opinion he charges upon

(*p*) Ariſt. Metaphyſ. lib. i. cap. 3. Oper. tom. ii. p. 842. Edit. Paris 1629.

thoſe who firſt theologized, and whom he calls the moſt antient of all, who made Ocean and Thetis to be the firſt authors or fathers of the generation of things (*q*). The tradition, that the world was formed by God out of a chaos, was of the higheſt antiquity, derived from the firſt ages, and was probably communicated by original revelation to the firſt parents of the human race. It is not only preſerved in the writings of Moſes, but, as was hinted before, had ſpread generally through the nations. The Pagan philoſophers and theologues were among the firſt that corrupted and perverted this antient tradition, by endeavouring to account for the origination of all things out of a chaos without any intelligent cauſe. Euſebius cites ſome paſſages out of a book of Plutarch, which he calls his Stromata, to ſhew the various opinions of the antient Greek philoſophers, called Phyſici, or natural philoſophers, concerning the origin and compoſition of the univerſe. He takes notice particularly of Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Metrodorus Chius, Empedocles, Democritus, Epicurus, Diogenes Apolloniata; and obſerves, that they who were accounted the moſt eminent of thoſe whom the Greeks called natural philoſophers, in their diſquiſitions concerning the conſtitution of things, and the coſmogonia or generation and production of the world, did not ſuppoſe any wiſe author or architect of the whole; nor did they make the leaſt mention of God in it (*r*). The moſt antient philoſophers were very fond of enquiring into the origin of the univerſe, and the firſt cauſes and principles of things; and truſting to the force of their own

(*q*) Ariſt. Metaphyſ. ubi ſupra, p. 843.

(*r*) Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 8. p. 22, et ſeq.

genius,

genius, they attempted, as if they had been ſo many makers of worlds, to form ſchemes of their own, concerning the formation of things; and, dropping God out of the account, valued themſelves upon ſhewing how the world might be made without him. But as a juſt judgment upon them, and to the diſgrace of human reaſon, they run into hypotheſes ſo abſurd and extravagant, that we are ready to wonder how they could enter into the head of any man of ſenſe. How rare a thing it had been among the antient Greek philoſophers to introduce an intelligent mind, in accounting for the origin and order of the univerſe, appears from the great joy Socrates expreſſed, when he heard that Anaxagoras had writ a book in which he declared, that an underſtanding mind is the cauſe of all things, and the author of that beautiful order that is to be obſerved in them. He ſpeaks of it as a kind of new diſcovery, which he had not met with in the books of other philoſophers; though he complains of his diſappointment, when he found that philoſopher did not apply this notion, as he expected he would have done, to the accounting for the particular phænomena of nature.

Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus have been particularly taken notice of for their abſurd ſchemes concerning the formation of the world by a fortuitous concourſe of atoms. But the ſchemes of many others of the antient philoſophers were really no leſs abſurd, in endeavouring to account for the origin of things without the interpoſition and contrivance of an infinite underſtanding mind. And yet they all of them profeſſed to acknowledge a

god

god or gods (*s*); for the people would not have endured them if they had abſolutely denied a Deity. Epicurus himſelf aſſerted, that there are gods; and pretended to argue from the innate ideas of the gods implanted in the minds of all men (*t*). And here by thway we may obſerve the great ignorance of the Athenians, the moſt learned and polite people of Greece, in matters of religion. They ſhewed no public marks of reſentment againſt the authors and abettors of ſchemes which were really atheiſtical, and which by excluding God from the creation or government of the world tended to ſubvert the foundation of all religion, and yet baniſhed Anaxagoras, and put Socrates to death, both of whom taught that the world was formed by a wiſe and underſtanding mind, becauſe they ſuſpected them to have no great regard for the popular deities. And that the atheiſtical ſchemes advanced by many of the philoſophers had a very bad effect, and made no ſmall progreſs among the people, appears from what Plato ſays in the beginning of his tenth book of laws, where he complains, that there were many, eſpecially of the younger ſort, who maintained, that "the heavens, the animals, plants, and "all things were produced, not by underſtanding, nor by any god,

(*s*) Thoſe of them who made matter the only firſt principle, made a ſhew of maintaining one firſt cauſe, one eternal and neceſſarily exiſtent principle, which they called God. But then they ſubdivided this into particular deities. Thus Anaximander and Anaximenes, who held an infinite matter to be the prineiple from which all things flow, and into which all things return, held innumerable gods and worlds, ſucceſſively riſing and falling *.

(*t*) See what Velleius the Epicurean ſays to this purpoſe, ap. Cic. De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 17.

* Cic. De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 10. Plut. De Placit. Phil. lib. i. c. 3.

"nor

" nor by art or ſkill, but by nature and fortune—φύσει καὶ τύχῃ," i. e. by an unintelligent nature and chance: and that " theſe ſort " of ſpeeches were ſpread in a manner univerſally among all " men.—Κατεσπαρμένοι οἱ τοιάυτοι λόγοι ἐν τοῖς πᾶσιν, ὡς ἔπος " εἰπεῖν, ἀνθρώποις (*u*)." This was before the days of Epicurus; and it is well known that his numerous ſect, which openly avowed that doctrine, made a great progreſs both among the Greeks and Romans.

Diodorus Siculus, giving an account of the ſentiments of the antients, eſpecially of the antient Egyptians, concerning the origin of things, takes no notice of the Deity as having any concern in it (*x*). Laertius tells us from Manetho and Hecatæus, that the Egyptians held matter to be the principle of things (*y*). And Porphyry in his letter to Anebo, an Egyptian prieſt, as cited by Euſebius, obſerves, that Chæremon, and others of the learned Egyptians, acknowledged no other gods than the ſtars, and the ſun, whom they affirmed to be the demiurgus or architect of the world, and that they applied the ſtories of Iſis and Oſiris, and other ſacred fables, to the courſe of the ſun, the motions and aſpects of the ſtars, their riſings and ſettings, to the river Nile, and other natural and inanimate things, and made no mention of any living or incorporeal natures or eſſences; and that they made even thoſe things which are in the power of our own wills to depend

(*u*) Plat. de Leg. lib. x. Oper. p. 666. B. Edit. Lugd.

(*x*) Diod. Sic. lib. i. p. 6, 7. et Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 7.

(*y*) Laert. in Procem. ſegm. 10.

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on the motions of the ſtars, binding all things in the inevitable chains of neceſſity. Euſebius remarks upon this occaſion, that even in the arcane theology of the Egyptians, no other but the ſtars of heaven, wandering and fixed, were placed by them in the number of their gods. And that they did not acknowledge any incorporeal maker or architect of the univerſe, nor attribute the forming or ordering of it to any reaſon or wiſdom which effected it, or to any intelligent natures which do not fall under the ſenſes, but only to the viſible ſun. And that therefore they made all things depend upon the neceſſity of fate, and the motions and influences of the ſtars: which opinion, Euſebius ſaith, prevailed among them in his time (z). Dr. Cudworth indeed ſharply blames Euſebius for paſſing ſo ſevere a cenſure on the Egyptian theology, and for puſhing his charge againſt the Heathens in this and other inſtances with too much rigour. But all that the teſtimonies produced by the learned Doctor prove, is only that this was not the univerſal doctrine of all the Egyptian wiſe men. But that many of their learned men and philoſophers were of theſe ſentiments the paſſage quoted from Porphyry ſufficiently ſhews. And Euſebius ſeems to aſſert, as from his own knowledge, that it continued to be a prevailing doctrine among them when he wrote. Nor is Iamblicus, upon whoſe teſtimony Dr. Cudworth ſeems chiefly to rely, much to be depended upon in the account he gives of the Egyptian theology, which, by this learned writer's own acknowledgment, he takes pains in ſeveral inſtances to diſguiſe.

(z) Præpar. Evangel. lib. iii. cap. 4. p. 92, 93. et ibid. cap. 13. p. 119. A.

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I would obſerve by the way, that the account which the learned Chineſe give of the origination of things, is no leſs abſurd than that of thoſe antient Greek and Egyptian philoſophers. They ſay there muſt of neceſſity be a firſt cauſe or principle of all things: which they call Li and Tai-kie, the reaſon and ground of all nature. And that this firſt cauſe is an infinite being, incorruptible, pure, ſubtil, without bodily ſhape, and without beginning or end. If we were to judge merely by theſe epithets of the firſt cauſe, we might be apt to entertain a very favourable opinion of their philoſophy. But they alſo ſuppoſe this firſt cauſe to be void of life, intelligence, and liberty (*a*). They are very particular in their enquiries how all things are produced out of this univerſal ſubſtance, and what are the ſeveral changes and converſions through which they paſs: but they make the production of the univerſe to be entirely natural and accidental, not the effect of an underſtanding mind and

(*a*) Mr. De Voltaire in his Hiſtoire Univerſelle, as I find him quoted by the Abbé Gauchet Lettres Critiques, tom. iv. lettre 36, praiſes the Literati of China; for that, "leaving the ſuperſtitions as a groſſer food to the people, the magiſtrates "and men of letters are nouriſhed by a purer ſubſtance." What the pure religion of the Chineſe Literati is, who are ſo much cried up by many of thoſe that ſet up for the patrons of natural religion, may be clearly ſeen in the treatiſe of F. Longobardi here referred to. He gives an account of ſeveral converſations he had with the moſt learned Mandarins. That they laughed at the Chriſtian account of a living intelligent Being, who created and governeth all things. And particularly he mentions one Li King, an eminent Doctor and Mandarin, who, when the father miſſionaries aſſerted, that there is one living, immortal, and omnipotent God, who rewards every man according to his actions, poſitively denied there was any ſuch God, or a heaven or hell, as things never heard of in his [the learned] ſect. The ſame author declares, that he had converſed with great numbers of their learned men and Mandarins in ſeveral parts of China, during the many years he reſided there, and found that they all agreed in theſe notions. See the book above quoted, p. 196, 197, 198.

will. The reader may ſee a particular account of all this, confirmed from Chineſe books of the greateſt authority among the learned ſect, in F. Longobardi's treatiſe before referred to, and which is contained in the fifth book of Navarette's account of the empire of China; and Navarette himſelf affirms from his own knowledge, that the learned Chineſe are ſo ſtrongly attached to theſe notions, that nothing can perſuade them to the contrary. See Navarette's Account of China in the firſt volume of Churchill's Collection of Travels, &c. p. 113, and p. 137, et ſeq.

It will be eaſily allowed, that the authors and defenders of the ſchemes of philoſophy which have been mentioned, were no way proper to inſtruct the people in the right knowledge of God and religion. But it may be ſaid, there were others of a nobler character. Admirable paſſages have been produced from their writings, ſtill extant, concerning the exiſtence, the perfections, the attributes and providence of the Deity. They argued from the illuſtrious characters of wiſdom and deſign, of goodneſs and benignity, which appear in the frame and conſtitution of the world; that it did not owe its original to an undeſigning chance, or a blind unintelligent nature, but that there is a moſt wiſe and benign and powerful Mind, which formed this univerſal ſyſtem, and is the Cauſe of the order and harmony which is viſible in it. Far be it from me to deny theſe philoſophers their juſt praiſes. They certainly deſerve to be honourably diſtinguiſhed from thoſe who aſcribed all to chance or mere unintelligent matter. I look upon ſome of them to have been inſtruments in the hands of Providence, for putting a check to the progreſs of atheiſm, and for pre-

preſerving ſome remains of religion, when by the deluſions of a falſe and vain philoſophy, it was in danger of being extinguiſhed, among perſons pretending to a knowledge and penetration above the vulgar. Yet upon the moſt impartial enquiry it will appear, that the notions of theſe beſt of the philoſophers, with regard to that great and fundamental article of all religion, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, were in many inſtances very defective; and mixed with ſuch dangerous errors, as rendered them not very fit to be the guides and inſtructors of mankind, and to recover the nations from the idolatry and polytheiſm into which they were fallen.

I ſhall take notice of the ſentiments of ſome of the moſt celebrated among them.

Thales is ſaid to have been the firſt that introduced philoſophy into Greece: and concerning his ſentimens the learned are not agreed. Ariſtotle ſeems to reckon him among thoſe philoſophers who made matter the only principle and cauſe of all things (*b*). But according to Cicero, Thales held that all things had their origin from water, but that God was the mind which out of water faſhioned all things. "Thales Mileſius, qui primus de "talibus rebus quæſivit, aquam dixit eſſe initium rerum: deum "autem eam mentem quæ ex aquâ cuncta fingeret (*c*)" In this he is followed by Minucius Felix and Lactantius. But St. Auſtin, who no doubt was well acquainted with that paſſage of Cicero,

(*b*) Ariſt. Metaphyſ. lib. i. cap. 3.

(*c*) De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 10.

ſeems to have paid no great regard to it: for having obſerved that Thales made water to be the principle of things, out of which the world and all things in it had their exiſtence; he poſitively affirms, that this philoſopher did not ſuppoſe a divine mind to have had any efficiency or ſuperintendency in the formation of the univerſe. "Nihil huic operi quod mundo conſiderato tam admi-"rabile aſpicimus, ex divinâ mente præpoſuit (*d*)." But if Cicero's account of Thales's opinion be admitted, it ſhews that he preſerved the primitive tradition, that God framed the earth out of a chaos, or maſs of fluid matter. Thales might probably have learned it in the eaſtern parts to which he travelled: and he himſelf is ſaid to have been of Phœnician extraction. Minucius Felix thinks it was too ſublime to be of his own invention, and that it came originally from a divine revelation or tradition (*e*). Laertius mentions a ſaying of Thales, which if it may be depended upon ſeems to confirm what Cicero ſays of him, viz. "That the "world is the faireſt or moſt beautiful of things, for it is the "work of God.—ποίημα γὰρ θεοῦ (*f*)." But Plutarch gives it a little otherwiſe, and as ſome think more accurately, thus; that "the world is the moſt beautiful of things, for whatſoever is or-"derly and fitly proportioned is a part of it (*g*)." But whatever may be ſaid of Thales himſelf, none of thoſe who followed him in the Ionic ſchool, of which he was the founder, till the time of

(*d*) De Civ. Dei, lib. viii. cap. 2. p. 146. Edit. Bened.

(*e*) Min. Fel. cap. xix. p. 149, 150. Edit. var. Lugd. Bat. 1672.

(*f*) Laert. lib. i. ſegm. 35.

(*g*) In convivio ſeptem ſapientum. Oper. tom. ii. p. 153. C.

Anaxagoras, attributed the formation of the world to an intelligent mind (*b*).

Pythagoras, who was a little poſterior to Thales, was a philoſopher of great name, and the founder of what is called the Italic ſchool. He has been reckoned among the aſſerters of one God, and an incorporeal mind. Lactantius ſays of him, "Pythagoras "unum Deum confitetur dicens incorporalem eſſe mentem." But he affected ſo great an obſcurity, that if he had been never ſo

(*b*) The learned Dr. Campbell ſeems not be well ſatisfied with the account given of Thales's opinion in the paſſage above quoted from Cicero. He thinks it probable that Thales aſſigned water as the only principle concerned in the formation of the world: and ſays, he knows of no philoſopher, that ſingle paſſage of Cicero excepted, who explains his opinion otherwiſe. He alſo obſerves, that the paſſage in Cicero is lame and imperfect, and conſequently very perplexed and obſcure. But in this I cannot agree with that learned author. The words in which Thales's opinion is repreſented are very clear and expreſs. It is true, that the following words in which Velleius endeavours to refute that opinion are very perplexed. And it is generally thought that the place is corrupted. Lambinus has propoſed one emendation, and Dr. Davies another. This however may be gathered from it, that Velleius ſuppoſed Thales to have held that mind was ſome way joined with the water in order to the production and formation of things. If the meaning be, that Thales held God to be united to the watry maſs as the ſoul of the world, it is not improbable that this was his opinion. And it is what Plutarch ſeems to intend when he tells us, that Thales ſaid, "the mind or intelligence of the world is God." De Placit. Phil. lib. i. cap. 7. And this may help us to account for that noted ſaying of Thales, that "all things are full of gods." For if he held God to be the ſoul of the world, he might look upon particular ſouls and intelligent beings, as Pythagoras and the Stoics did afterwards, to be portions of the univerſal ſoul; and upon particular parts of the univerſe, as animated with this univerſal ſoul, to be gods. And thus was a foundation laid for polytheiſm, and a multiplicity of deities. Agreeable to this is the account Stobæus gives us of Thales's ſentiments, that he held that "the intelligence or mind of the world is God; and "that the world is animated, and full of dæmons." Stob. Eclog. Phyſ. lib. i. cap. 2. Edit. Plantin. See alſo to the ſame purpoſe Laert. lib. i. ſegm. 27.

right

right in his ſentiments concerning God and divine things, he could have been of little uſe to the people. Nor indeed was he to be depended upon as a ſafe guide, if he had expreſſed himſelf clearly and intelligibly. In a paſſage quoted by Clemens Alex. he aſſerts God to be the ſoul of the world, and the κρᾶσις τῶν ὅλων, the mixture or temperament of the whole (*i*). It is generally agreed, that he held God to be a mind univerſally diffuſed, and pervading all nature. But this mind, though he calls it incorporeal, does not ſeem to be a pure ſpirit, in the ſtricteſt and propereſt ſenſe. For he ſuppoſed the divine ſubſtance to be a fine and ſubtil æther, which expandeth itſelf through the univerſe, and is the cauſe of all the order that is in it, and the fountain of life to all beings. He maintained, according to Laertius, that the ſun, moon, and other ſtars are full of this æthereal ſubſtance, or heavenly vital heat (ardor cæleſtis, as Cicero calls it), and are therefore gods (*k*): That the ſoul is "ἀπόσπασμα αἰθέρος—a ſmall "part taken from the cæleſtial æther:" And thence he argued that the ſoul is immortal, becauſe that out of which it is diſcerped is immortal. "Ἀθάνατον εἶναι αὐτὴν [ψυχὴν] ἐπειδήπερ ἐκ τοῦ ἀφ' "οὗ ἀπέσπασται ἀθάνατόν ἐστι (*l*)." Cicero repreſents it as an acknowledged thing, that "Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans never "made any doubt, that our ſouls are taken out of the univerſal "divine mind or ſoul.—Pythagoram Pythagoreoſque nunquam "dubitâſſe quin ex univerſâ mente divina delibatos animos habe-

(*i*) Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentes, p. 64. Edit. Potter.

(*k*) Laert. lib. viii. ſegm. 27.

(*l*) Ibid. ſegm. 28.

"remus

" remus (*m*)." And he elſewhere introduces Velleius arguing, that at that rate " God himſelf is diſcerped and torn, when hu-
" man ſouls are plucked off from his ſubſtance: and when any
" of them is miſerable (which frequently happens) a part of
" God is miſerable; which cannot be." And he aſks, " How
" ſhould the human mind be ignorant of any thing, if it were
" God?" " Pythagoras, qui cenſuit animum eſſe per naturam
" rerum omnem intentum et commeantem, ex quo animi noſtri
" carperentur, non vidit diſtractione humanorum animorum diſ-
" cerpi et dilacerari Deum, et cum miſeri animi eſſent (quod
" pleriſque contingerit) tum Dei partem eſſe miſeram; quod
" fieri non poteſt. Cur autem quicquam ignoraret animus ho-
" minis, ſi eſſet Deus? (*n*)" Pythagoras's ſcheme plainly led to polytheiſm, or a plurality of gods: and he himſelf was a promoter of it. Iamblicus ſays, Pythagoras was inſtructed concerning the worſhip of the gods, partly from the Egyptians, partly from the Eleuſinian and other myſteries (*o*); which (by the way) ſuppoſes, that the worſhip of a multiplicity of deities, and the ceremonies relating to them, were taught in the myſteries (*p*).

The next I ſhall mention is Anaxagoras, concerning whom Cicero obſerves, that he was the firſt who aſſerted, that " the re-

(*m*) Cato Major ſive De Senect. cap. 21.

(*n*) De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 11.

(*o*) Iambl. Vit. Pythag. ſect. 151, 152.

(*p*) The learned Dr. Campbell has inſiſted largely on Pythagoras, and his ſentiments, and will by no means allow, that he had a juſt notion of God the Creator of the univerſe. Neceſſ. of Revel. from p. 236 to p. 264.

" gular

" gular order and motion of all things was planned out and ac-
" compliſhed by the force and reaſon of an infinite mind.—
" Anaxagoras primus omnium rerum deſcriptionem et motum
" mentis infinitæ vi ac ratione deſignari ac confici voluit (*q*)."
This ſeems to contradict what Cicero had ſaid of Thales a little before. For if it had been the doctrine of Thales, as he repreſents it, that a divine mind was concerned in the formation of all things, how could it be ſaid, that Anaxagoras, who lived many years after Thales, was the firſt that taught this? It muſt therefore be allowed, to make Cicero conſiſtent with himſelf, that he ſuppoſed ſome difference between the opinion of Thales, and that of Anaxagoras, concerning this matter. The way that Dr. Davies takes to account for it in his note on this paſſage is, that Thales ſuppoſed God to be the ſoul of the world mixed and united with matter (and this I have ſhewn was probably his opinion); whereas Anaxagoras held him to be a pure mind, not united to matter, but free from all corporeal mixture. And indeed it appears from what Cicero makes Velleius ſay, when he endeavours to confute him, that he ſuppoſed Anaxagoras to hold that God was a ſimple mind, ſeparate from matter, or any corporeal concretion, and without any thing joined to it or mixed with it. This Velleius repreſents as abſolutely unintelligible; it being a thing which the Epicureans, ſuch as Velleius was, had no notion of. " Aperta ſimplexque mens, nullâ re adjunctâ, quâ ſentire poſſit,
" fugere intelligentiæ noſtræ vim et notionem videtur." And Ariſtotle tells us, that Anaxagoras ſuppoſed this mind to be " the

(*q*) De nat. Deor. i. cap. 11.
(*r*) De Anima, lib. i. cap. 2.

" only

"only being that is ſimple, and unmixed, and pure.—Μόνον τῶν "ὄντων ἁπλῶν καὶ ἀμιγῆ καὶ καθαρόν (r)." Laertius informs us, that Anaxagoras aſſerted "νοῦν μὲν ἀρχὴν κινήσεως—that mind is the "beginning or principle of motion." And Plutarch gives his opinion thus, that he ſaid, that "bodies did exiſt from the be-"ginning, but the mind or intellect of God reduced them into "a comely order, and effected the origination of all things, or "of the univerſe—τῶν ὅλων (s)." This was accounted ſo wonderful a diſcovery, that he had the name of Νοῦς, *Mind* or *Intellect*, given him on the account of it. And yet it does not appear that in this nobleſt part of his philoſophy he had any among the philoſophers to follow him except Socrates and his diſciples. Nor did he himſelf make a right uſe and application of this excellent principle, or direct others to do ſo, in order to the explaining the particular phænomena of nature, but aſcribed them merely to mechanical and material cauſes; for which he is juſtly cenſured by Socrates. Ariſtotle has the ſame obſervation (t). He took no notice of a Divine Agency in the formation of animals; but endeavoured to account for it in a manner not unlike that of Epicurus. He ſuppoſed animals to have ſprung up out of a humid, warm, and earthy matter, and afterwards to have generated one another (u).

Socrates

(r) See preceding page, where the note is placed by miſtake.

(s) De Placit. Philoſ. lib. i. cap. 7. Opera. tom. ii. p. 881. A. Edit Francof.

(t) Ariſt. Metaphyſ. lib. i. cap. 4.

(u) Laert. lib. ii. ſegm. 9. The learned Dr. Campbell looks upon this to be a proof that Anaxagoras did not arrive at the notion of an Infinite Mind merely by an effort of his own reaſon, in enquiring into the cauſe and connexion of things.

Socrates comes next to be conſidered, who was, in ſeveral reſpects, the beſt and moſt excellent of all the philoſophers that lived before the coming of our Saviour. Xenophon obſerves concerning him, that he did not diſcourſe about the heavens, and how the world had its origin; and that he greatly blamed the folly and arrogance of thoſe, who were wont to ſpeculate upon theſe matters, which he looked upon to be above the comprehenſion of human reaſon; and thought that ſuch diſquiſitions were not acceptable to the gods. And indeed the philoſophers before him, who had profeſſed to ſearch into the nature and origin of things, had fallen for the moſt part into ſuch wild and extravagant hypotheſes, and which only tended to lead men into atheiſm, that it is not to be wondered at that Socrates declined and diſcouraged

And it muſt be owned, that this gives one no very favourable opinion of his ability in arguing from the works of nature to the exiſtence and perfections of the Deity. Nor can any man prove that he had not the firſt hint of it from antient tradition. Yet on the other hand it cannot be proved, that it was not poſſible for him to have attained to it in the exerciſe of his own reaſon. Human reaſon will often diſcover part of a truth and not the whole, and will argue juſtly and conſequentially in one inſtance, and very extravagantly in another, relating to the ſame ſubject. Allowing that Anaxagoras was convinced in general, and that his reaſon led him to conclude, that a pure and intelligent mind, and not ſtupid matter, was the firſt cauſe and principle of motion, and of the orderly diſpoſition of things in the univerſe, yet it may well be ſuppoſed, that, like the other philoſophers of thoſe times, he valued himſelf upon accounting for the ſeveral particular phænomena of nature by hypotheſes of his own; and accordingly endeavoured to ſhew his ſagacity by pointing out to what he judged might be the probable natural cauſes of the formation of animals. But his attempts that way only furniſhed new proofs of the weakneſs of human reaſon, when truſting merely to its own force in enquiries of this nature. He ſeems to have had no notion of the wiſdom of God ſo conſpicuous in the human frame, and which the Royal Pſalmiſt celebrates in that noble and devout ſtrain: "I will praiſe thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy "works, &c."

ſuch

ſuch enquiries (*x*). Yet, as was before obſerved, he approved the main principle of Anaxagoras concerning an Infinite Mind as the cauſe of the regular order of things in the univerſe: though he found fault with him for not making a right application of this excellent principle.

Let us therefore enquire what uſe Socrates himſelf made of it. And to this purpoſe I ſhall produce ſome paſſages out of Xenophon's memorable things of Socrates. For it is generally agreed that his account of Socrates's ſentiments is written with greater clearneſs and ſimplicity, and is more to be depended on than that given us by Plato, who ſeems frequently to put his own ſentiments upon us under his maſter's name.

The converſation of Socrates with Ariſtodemus is one of the moſt valuable things which Pagan antiquity hath left us. Ariſtodemus is repreſented as a man who had little regard to religion, and was even apt to turn it into ridicule. The deſign of Socrates was to bring him to a right ſenſe of God and of a Providence, and of the worſhip and honour juſtly due to the Divinity. With this view he makes ſome excellent reflections on the admirable fabric of the human body, the fine diſpoſition of its parts, and the uſeful purpoſes to which they are manifeſtly deſigned; as alſo on the noble faculties and powers of the human ſoul, in order to ſhew that theſe things were not made or conſtituted by chance, but with wonderful wiſdom as well as goodneſs. He mentions the

(*x*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. cap. 1. ſegm. 11, 12, 13. et lib. iv. cap. 7. ſegm. 5, 6.

underſtanding or prudence that is in the univerſe, " τὴν ἐν παντι " φρόνησιν," and which ordereth all things in the manner that is moſt agreeable to it (*x*). He repreſents the eye of God as ſeeing all things at once, and ſeems to point to one author of the human frame, who made man from the beginning, " ὁ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ποιῶν " ἀνθρωπον (*y*)." And yet it cannot but be obſerved with concern, that through the whole of that dialogue he generally ſpeaks of the gods in the plural number. He repreſents the gods as the authors of the human frame, as exerciſing a conſtant care over mankind, and ordering all things for our uſe and benefit, and as ſeeing and knowing all things (*z*). The concluſion of the dialogue deſerves ſpecial notice. " If thou makeſt trial," ſays he, " of the " gods, by worſhipping them, whether they will give thee counſel " concerning things which are obſcure to men, thou ſhalt know " the Divinity, that it is ſo great and of ſuch a nature, that they" [i. e. the gods] " both ſee and hear all things, and are every " where preſent, and take care of all things at once (*a*)." Here he ſeems to ſpeak in high terms of the Divinity, τὸ θεῖον. And if the words were taken ſeparately, we might be apt to interpret it of the one true God, and of him only; but it appears from what goes immediately before and follows after, that he applies this not to one God only, but to the gods, and ſeems to repreſent the

(*x*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. cap. 4. ſegm. 17.

(*y*) Ibid. ſegm. 5.

(*z*) Ibid. ſegm. 11, 12, 13, 14.

(*a*) Ibid. ſ. 18. Γνώσῃ τὸ θεῖον, ὅτι τοσοῦτον καὶ τοιοῦτον ἐστιν, ὥστε ἅμα πάντα ὁρᾶν, καὶ πάντα ἀκούειν, καὶ πανταχοῦ παρεῖναι, καὶ ἅμα πάντων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἀυτούς. i. e. θεούς, of whom he had ſpoken juſt before.

divinity

divinity he ſpeaks of, not as peculiar and appropriate to one, but that there is a plurality of gods who are ſharers of it, and to whom the glorious divine characters he mentions belong. And accordingly Xenophon concludes the account he gives of the converſation of Socrates with Ariſtodemus with this reflection: That "Socrates "by ſaying ſuch things endeavoured to engage thoſe he con- "verſed with, not only to abſtain from things impure, unjuſt, "and baſe, when they were ſeen of men, but even when they "were in ſolitude, as being perſuaded that none of their actions "can be concealed from the gods (*b*)."

The ſame obſervation may be made on Socrates's converſation with Euthydemus, of which alſo Xenophon gives an account (*c*). There is one paſſage in this dialogue which deſerves to be particularly conſidered. He adviſes Euthydemus not to wait to ſee the forms of the gods, but to think it ſufficient to behold their works, in order to the worſhipping and honouring them, ſince it is thus that the gods manifeſt themſelves to us. "For," ſays he, "both the other gods, when they beſtow good things upon us, "do it in ſuch a manner as not themſelves to come into open "view: and He that frameth and containeth the whole world, "in which are all good and beautiful things, and who preſerveth it "always in a ſound and undecaying ſtate for the benefit of thoſe "that uſe it——is ſeen to perform the greateſt things; yet whilſt "he orders and governs all this, is himſelf inviſible to us (*d*)."

(*b*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. ſegm. 19.

(*c*) Ibid. lib. iv. cap. 3.

(*d*) Ibid. ſ. 13.

He

He ſeems here plainly to point to a ſingular being, as diſtinguiſhed from " οἱ ἄλλοι—the other gods," and deſcribes him by the ſublime character of " ὁ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον συντάτ῀ων τὲ καὶ συνέχων, ἐν ᾧ " πάντα καλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ ἐ῀ι.—He that frameth or putteh in order, " and containeth the whole world, in which are all great and " beautiful things." Yet he elſewhere in his converſation with Ariſtodemus uſes nearly the ſame expreſſions concerning the gods; that " they have framed or put in order the greateſt and moſt " beautiful things.—θεῶν τὰ μέγι῀α καὶ κάλλι῀α συνταξάντων (*e*)." And he there particularly aſcribes to them the contriving and forming the human conſtitution (*f*). And the profeſſed deſign of the whole diſcourſe with Euthydemus, of which the noble paſſage I have been now conſidering is a part, is to ſhew that the gods take care of and continually do good to men, and therefore ought to be worſhipped. Accordingly he all along ſets himſelf to demonſtrate the great care and goodneſs of the gods in providing both for our neceſſity and convenience, and for our pleaſure; and alſo in giving us ſenſe, reaſon, ſpeech, and cauſing the heavenly bodies, the earth, the ſeaſons, and the various kinds of animals, to miniſter to our uſe and benefit. All theſe things he aſcribes to the providence of the gods, and mentions them as inſtances and proofs of their benevolence towards mankind. And he concludes this excellent diſcourſe with obſerving, that " we ought to " honour the gods according to our ability, and confidently to hope " for the greateſt bleſſings from them. For no man in his right

(*e*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. I. cap. 4. ſ. 13.

(*f*) Ibid. ſ. 11, 12.

" ſenſes

" ſenſes can expect to receive greater things from others than " from thoſe who have it in their power to do us good in the " greateſt inſtances. Nor can any man hope for this in any other " way but by pleaſing them. And how can he pleaſe them bet- " ter than by obeying them to the utmoſt of his power? (*g*)." Thus it appears, that if this great man had a notion, as it is probable he had, of one Divine Being, ſuperior to the other deities, yet he takes little notice of him as diſtinguiſhed from the reſt. He ſtill ſeems to have a plurality of gods in view, whom he recommends upon all occaſions to the eſteem, the adoration, and obedience of mankind: from whom flow all good things, on whoſe favour we continually depend, and whom we are under indiſpenſable obligations to pleaſe, to worſhip, and obey. And what has been obſerved concerning Socrates, may be alſo applied to Xenophon, who was a cloſe follower of that great philoſopher.

The celebrated Plato, who was another of Socrates's diſciples, has ſeveral paſſages which ſeem to contain an expreſs acknowledgment of one Supreme God. He calls him in his Timæus, " ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ ὁ πατὴρ τοῦδε τοῦ παντος—the Maker and Father of " this univerſe;" and deſcribes him in ſeveral parts of his works by a variety of moſt magnificent epithets: " ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεὸς—the " God who is over all: τῆς φύσεως κτίστης—the Builder or " Framer of nature: πάντων αἴτιον—the Cauſe of all things:" and repreſents him as the " τὸ ὄν—the Being," by way of eminency, or " that which exiſts;" " τὸ ἀγαθὸν—the [chief] good."

(*g*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. iv. cap. 3. ſ. 17.

But

But theſe ſublime ſpeculations he thought it neither proper nor ſafe to communicate to the people. Nor does he propoſe him to them as the object of their worſhip. He every where on all occaſions mentions the gods When he undertakes to prove the exiſtence of a Deity againſt the atheiſts, what he ſets himſelf to prove is that there are gods: when he argues for a providence, it is the providence of the gods. And the gods he principally recommends to the people as the objects of their worſhip, their truſt and dependence, are heaven and the heavenly bodies, the ſun, moon and ſtars, and the gods publicly adored, and eſtabliſhed by the laws. This I only mention here, as I ſhall give full proof of it in another place (*b*).

The ſentiments of the famous Ariſtotle concerning the Deity are not very clear or conſiſtent. He blames thoſe who aſcribed the original of motion to chance or fortune, or mere matter, and aſſerts one eternal firſt mover, whom he calls the Supreme God. He deſcribes him by noble epithets, as eternal, indiviſible, immutable, without all parts and magnitude, without all body, and not united to matter. But when we examine more narrowly into his ſentiments, this Supreme God is only the intelligence, which either as a ſoul animates, or as a ſeparate form ſuperintends,

(*b*) There ſeems to be a juſt foundation for the charge which Velleius in Cicero brings againſt Plato. Having obſerved that Plato ſays, that the Father of the world cannot be ſo much as named, and that God is without body, he adds, "Idem et "in Timæo dicit, et in legibus, et mundum Deum eſſe, et cœlum, et aſtra, et ter-"ram, et animos, et eos quos majorum inſtitutis accepimus: quæ et per ſe ſunt "falſa perſpicuè, et inter ſeſe vehementer repugnantia." De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 12. p. 32.

the

the uppermoſt ſphere of heaven, which revolveth from all eternity in one uniform orbicular motion, of all others the moſt perfect: and from thence communicates motion to all other parts of the univerſe. But then he holds, that there are ſeveral other ſpheres, everlaſtingly revolving, which have their diſtinct intelligences animating or ſuperintending them, each of whom are eternal and immortal beings, and like the Firſt Mover unchangeable, indiviſible, without bodily parts or magnitude. And therefore they are truly and properly gods, as well as he that inhabits or ſuperintends the higheſt ſphere. And accordingly he declares, that theſe are the gods which antient tradition teaches; and he recommends this as the true original theology: and that the other gods, by which he means the hero deities, were invented afterwards for the purpoſes of civil government, and to keep the people in obedience to the laws (*i*).

If we go from the Greeks to the Romans, who derived their philoſophy from the Greeks, the moſt eminent of them was that great man Cicero. And the proper place to look for his ſentiments on this ſubject, ſeems to be in his celebrated books De naturâ Deorum, where he treats profeſſedly concerning this matter. It is true, that according to the manner of the New Academy he there diſputes on all ſides without coming to a poſitive determination. But the declaration he makes in the concluſion of the

(*i*) Ariſt. Metaphyſ. lib. xiv. cap. 8. Oper. tom. ii. p. 1003. Edit. Paris 1629. See a fuller account of Ariſtotle's ſentiments, confirmed by expreſs references to ſeveral parts of that philoſopher's works, in Dr. Campbell's Neceſſity of Revelation, p. 276, et ſeq.

whole directs us to what he thought the moſt probable opinion. And by that declaration it appears, that the ſtoical doctrine concerning God, and which was maintained by Balbus throughout the ſecond book, was what he moſt approved. He there makes Balbus argue with great ſtrength and eloquence from the beauty and order and wiſe contrivance of the works of nature, that they did not owe their original to chance, or to a fortuitous concourſe of atoms. But then the reſult of his argument is to prove, that the world, as animated by an univerſal ſoul, is God: and that this ſoul is an intellectual fire or æther, pervading the whole univerſe, and producing things according to their ſeveral natures (*k*). And he argues alſo for the divinity of the ſtars, as animated by the ſame univerſal ſoul. And this may help us to judge of the true meaning of ſeveral other paſſages, which have been often quoted from this juſtly admired author relating to the Deity. Nothing is more certain than that he generally ſpeaks of a plurality of gods, and this even when he is arguing for the exiſtence of a Deity and a Providence againſt the Atheiſts and Epicureans; and that he was for encouraging and promoting the worſhip of the popular divinities eſtabliſhed by the laws. But of this I ſhall have occaſion to treat more diſtinctly afterwards.

From the account which hath been given of the moſt excellent of the Pagan philoſophers who flouriſhed before our Saviour's coming it appears, that their ſchemes of philoſophy or theology were not calculated to recover the nations from that idolatry and polytheiſm in which they were ſo deeply and generally involved.

(*k*) The doctrine of the Stoics concerning God will be more particularly conſidered in the following chapter.

The

The good things they taught were mixed with great errors; or if we ſhould ſuppoſe them to have been never ſo right in their own notions, they wanted a proper authority to enforce their inſtructions upon mankind. Nor can their attainments be juſtly brought as a proof of the powers of human nature in matters of religion, when left merely to itſelf and its own unaſſiſted force, except it can be ſhewn that the notions they taught were merely the product of their own enquiries, independently of all foreign inſtruction and aſſiſtance. But whatever may be ſuppoſed of the poſſibility of this, yet, as far as we can judge by the accounts antiquity has left us, this was not in fact the caſe. I am very ſenſible that many are unwilling to own, that the Heathens, eſpecially their wiſe men and philoſophers, derived the knowledge they had of God and of the main principles of natural religion from any other ſource than merely the light of their own natural reaſon without any help from revelation or tradition. This is what the learned Dr. Sykes has ſet himſelf to ſhew in his "Prin-"ciples and Connexion of Natural and Revealed Religion," and particularly in the 14th and 15th chapters of that book, which take up near a third part of the whole. He thinks, that as thoſe principles are very reaſonable in themſelves, men of ſuch great abilities, as they certainly were, might eaſily diſcover them by their own reaſonings. But this ſeems to me not to be a very juſt way of arguing to prove that they actually did ſo. Many things there are which appear to be perfectly agreeable to reaſon when once diſcovered, which yet men left to themſelves would not have actually found out by the mere force of their own reaſon, with-

out inſtruction and aſſiſtance (*l*). If we allow the Heathens themſelves to be proper witneſſes in this matter, it appears from their teſtimony, that they had a principal part of their knowledge from tradition and foreign helps. The learned Doctor himſelf is obliged to make acknowledgments which are not very conſiſtent with his ſcheme. He owns that Plato, who excelled all the philoſophers before Chriſt's coming in ſublime ſpeculations concerning the divinity, "learned from foreigners the grand prin-"ciples of his philoſophy, and that he himſelf confeſſes it (*m*)." He ſays, that "Clement in his Stromata does certainly prove that "the Greek philoſophy was principally derived from what they "called the Barbarian (*n*)." And that "Euſebius has truly "proved, that the Greeks derived their knowledge from fo-"reigners." And that this is "proved beyond all poſſible contra-"diction by authorities unqueſtionable (*o*)." Yea, he goes ſo far as to declare, that "it is very plain that the beſt and wiſeſt men "among the Greeks travelled from Greece into Egypt, to get at "the knowledge of the unity, and the like important truths (*p*)."

(*l*) See concerning this the Introductory Diſcourſe, p. 4, 5, and the teſtimonies there produced. I ſhall here add another great authority from a celebrated antient, which has been mentioned by the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes. It is taken from Cicero's 3d book De Oratore, cap. 31. "Nam neque tam eſt "acris acies in naturis hominum atque ingeniis, ut res tantas quiſquam niſi mon-"ſtratas poſſit videre: neque tanta tamen in rebus obſcuritas, ut eas non penitùs "acri vir ingenio cernat, ſi modò adſpexerit."

(*m*) Sykes's Principles and Connexion of Nat. and Rev. Religion, p. 430.

(*n*) Ibid. p. 479.

(*o*) Ibid. p. 494.

(*p*) Ibid. p. 383.

This

This appears to me to be in effect a giving up the main point he propoſed to prove, which was, that the Heathens obtained that knowledge of God and his perfections, and of the great articles of natural religion, merely by the exerciſe of their own powers, and the right uſe they made of their reaſon, without the help of revelation or tradition. For if any of the antient Heathens may be ſuppoſed to have attained to the true knowledge of God and the main principles of natural religion, ſolely by their own rational enquiries, the Greeks certainly bid the faireſt for it, who were remarkable for the fineneſs and penetration of their genius; and yet, by his own acknowledgment, they did not attain to it by the force of their own reaſoning, but had it by tradition and inſtruction from others: though they might eaſily find out arguments to ſupport what they had thus received. Our author ſeems to be ſenſible that this is unfavourable to his hypotheſis: and therefore he inſinuates, that the Egyptians, from whom the Greeks derived their knowledge, "had learned their notions not "from any tradition at all, but had by ſearch found out thoſe "things of themſelves (*q*)." But what likelihood is there that the Egyptians found them out of themſelves, when he owns that the beſt and greateſt philoſophers of Greece, who were much more remarkable for cultivating the arts of reaſoning, did not ſo? Nor indeed was this the Egyptian method of philoſophizing; they did not reaſon out the principles of their theology, but profeſſed to have derived it from antient tradition, which they kept as a ſecret to themſelves, and carefully concealed from the people; though

(*q*) Sykes's Principles and Connexion of Nat. and Rev. Religion, p. 496.

they

they were far from keeping it pure and uncorrupted. And the higher we mount towards the firſt ages, the leſs probability there is that men found out thoſe principles by their own unaſſiſted reaſon. Afterwards, in the ages of learning and philoſophy, it might have been juſtly expected that they would have carried theſe principles to a high degree of improvement; but notwithſtanding the helps the philoſophers were furniſhed with, both from antient tradition and their own rational diſquiſitions, they were not to be depended upon as proper guides to mankind in religion, as has been already ſhewn, and will farther appear from what I proceed to offer on this ſubject.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Further proofs of the wrong ſentiments of the antient philoſophers in relation to the Divinity. Plutarch's opinion; and which he repreſents as having been very general among the antients, concerning two eternal principles, the one good, the other evil. Thoſe philoſophers who taught that the world was formed and brought into its preſent order by God, yet held the eternity of matter; and few if any of them believed God to be the Creator of the world in the proper ſenſe. Many of them, eſpecially after the time of Ariſtotle, maintained the eternity of the world in its preſent form. It was an eſtabliſhed notion among the moſt celebrated philoſophers, and which ſpread generally among the learned Pagans, that God is the ſoul of the world, and that the whole animated ſyſtem of the world is God. The pernicious conſequence of this notion ſhewn, and the uſe that was made of it for encouraging and promoting idolatry and polytheiſm.

THE celebrated Plutarch flouriſhed after Chriſtianity had made ſome progreſs in the world. But no man was better acquainted with the opinions of the antient Pagan philoſophers that lived before him. He acknowledged one perfectly wiſe and good God, the author of all good, and of the order ſo conſpicuous in the univerſe. But not being able to account for the evil that is in the world under the adminiſtration of a good God, he

aſſerted

aſſerted alſo a co-eternal evil, or diſorderly principle: though he ſuppoſed the former, the good principle, to be the moſt prevalent. This was an opinion be zealouſly maintained, as appears from ſeveral paſſages in his writings; particularly in his Timæan Pſychogonie, his Platonic Queſtions, and his treatiſe of Iſis and Oſiris. And he aſſerts it to have been the general ſentiment of the moſt antient and famous nations, and of the wiſeſt and greateſt perſons among them: ſome of them directly aſſerting two gods, others calling only the good principle God, as Plutarch himſelf does, and the evil one a Dæmon (*a*). That philoſopher affirms, that this notion obtained among the Perſians, and may be traced in the aſtrology of the Chaldæans, in the myſteries and ſacred rites of the Egyptians, and among the Greeks themſelves. And he endeavours to ſhew that the moſt eminent philoſophers were in the ſame ſentiments, particularly Pythagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Plato, Ariſtotle, and others. In this however his prejudices in favour of his own opinion ſeem to have carried him too far. Dr. Cudworth has taken pains to clear theſe philoſophers from the charge; and ſays, that for ought we can yet learn, Plutarch himſelf, Numenius, and Atticus, were the only Greek philoſophers who in their public writings openly maintained that opinion. But it is not probable, that if this had been the caſe Plutarch, who was ſo well acquainted with the hiſtory and tenets of the philoſophers, and ſo able a judge of them, would have aſſerted it to be ſo general as he has done. Dr. Cudworth himſelf afterwards mentions Apuleius as in the ſame

(*a*) Plut. De Iſid. et Oſir. Oper. tom. ii. p. 369, 570. Edit. Francof.

way of thinking. And it ſeems to have obtained among many of the oriental philoſophers.

But not to inſiſt upon this, it deſerves our notice, that few, if any, of the antient Pagan philoſophers, acknowledged God to be in the moſt proper ſenſe the Creator of the world. By calling him "Δη-μιουργος—the Maker of the world," they did not mean, that he brought it out of non-exiſtence into being, but only that he built it out of præ-exiſtent materials, and diſpoſed it into a regular form and order. Even thoſe philoſophers, who held God to be an incorporeal eſſence, yet ſuppoſed two firſt principles of things, really diſtinct from one another, both exiſting from eternity, an incorporeal mind, and paſſive matter. Of this opinion was Anaxagoras; ſo alſo was Pythagoras, as Numenius affirms, Archelaus, Archytas, and other Pythagoreans. Parmenides and Empedocles aſſerted, that God could not make any thing, but out of præexiſtent materials. Laertius expreſly aſſerts, that Plato held two principles, God and matter; and that matter is without form and infinite, but God put it in order (*b*). Plutarch alſo aſcribes this opinion to Plato, and to Socrates too, only he adds a third principle, viz. ideas. De Placit. Philoſ. lib. i. cap. 3. Oper. tom. 2.

(*b*) Laert. lib. iii. ſegm. 69. where ſee M. Caſaubon's note upon it; as alſo Menage's obſervations. Dr. Cudworth endeavours to ſhew that Plato held, that God created matter: but it would not be difficult to anſwer his arguments. Plato indeed ſuppoſes mind to be prior to body; but by body he does not underſtand the firſt matter, but that which is formed out of it. The learned Moſheim, in his Latin tranſlation of the Intellectual Syſtem, has, as I am informed, for I have not his book by me, a long diſſertation to prove that Dr. Cudworth is miſtaken, and that Plato did really hold, that matter was eternal: and indeed there are many authorities to prove it.

p. 878. He himſelf plainly aſſerts the eternity of matter; and argues, that God could not have formed the world if he had not had matter to work upon (*c*). Laertius obſerves concerning the Stoics, that they held there were two principles of the univerſe, " το ποιῶν καὶ το πάσχον—the active and the paſſive." " The paſ-" ſive is rude unformed matter; the active is the reaſon which " acteth in it, that is God (*d*)." This opinion of the Stoics is very clearly explained by Seneca, in the beginning of his 65th epiſtle. And Zeno in a paſſage cited by Stobæus ſays, that " the firſt " eſſence of all things that exiſt is matter, and this is all of it " eternal, and not capable of being either increaſed or dimi-" niſhed.—οὐσίαν τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἁπάντων, πρώτην ὕλην, ταύτην δὲ " πάσαν ἀίδιον οὔτε πλείω γινομένην οὔτε ἐλάττω (*e*)." Cicero, as quoted by Lactantius, ſays, that " it is not probable that the mat-" ter of things, out of which all things were made, was formed by " Divine Providence; but that it hath, and always had, a force " and nature of its own." And he goes on to argue, that " if " matter was not made by God, neither was earth, air, water, " and fire made by him (*f*)." The famous Galen, after having acknowledged that the opinion of Moſes, who aſcribed the production of all things to God, is far more agreeable to reaſon than

(*c*) Plut. Pſychogon. Oper. tom. ii. p. 1014. B, C.

(*d*) Laert. lib. vii. ſegm. 134. See alſo to the ſame purpoſe Plutarch De Placit. Phil. lib. i. cap. 3.

(*e*) Stob. Eclog. Phyſ. lib. i. cap. 14. p. 29. Edit. Plantin.

(*f*) Lactant. lib. ii. cap. 8. Davies thinks this was taken by Lactantius from Cicero's third book De nat. Deorum, ſome parts of which are now loſt. See the fragments at the end of the 3d book De nat. Deor. Edit. Davies. 2d. p. 342, 343.

that

that of Epicurus, who attributed the whole frame of things to a fortuitous concurſion of atoms, yet aſſerts the præ-exiſtence of matter: and that the power of God could not extend itſelf beyond the capacity of matter which it wrought upon: and that this was that in which Plato, and thoſe of the Greeks who writ rightly upon the nature of things, differed from Moſes. I would obſerve by the way, that here is a plain proof that the learned Heathens were ſenſible, that Moſes held that God not only formed the world out of matter, but created the matter itſelf out of which the world was made, which the Greek philoſophers denied. See Galen De Uſu Part. lib. ii. ap. Stilling. Orig. Sacræ, book iii. chap. 2. p. 441. Edit. 3d. The learned Dr. Thomas Burnet, who was well acquainted with the opinions of the antients, ſays, that the Ionic, Pythagoric, Platonic, and Stoic ſchools all agreed in aſſerting the eternity of matter: and that the doctrine, that matter was created out of nothing, ſeems to have been unknown to the philoſophers, and which they had no notion of (*g*).

It would be carrying it too far to ſay, that they who did not acknowledge God to have created the world from nothing, were not really Theiſts, or that they left no place for religion. For ſuppoſing that there is a ſupreme eternal Mind, of perfect wiſdom and goodneſs, which formed this world out of crude paſſive matter, and diſpoſed it into that regular and beautiful order in which we behold it, though he did not originally give exiſtence to that matter itſelf, yet even on this ſuppoſition, it would be reaſonable

(*g*) Archæol. lib. i. cap. 12.

for men to pay their religious adoration and obedience to the great Orderer and Framer of this vaſt ſyſtem, and who ſtill continueth to govern it. But though ſuch perſons could not be juſtly charged with atheiſtical principles, yet I think Dr. Cudworth very properly calls them "imperfect Theiſts;" and obſerves, that they had not "a right genuine idea of God." They abſurdly aſcribed neceſſary exiſtence, the nobleſt of the divine prerogatives, and which really comprehendeth all others under it, to ſuch a mean, inert, imperfect thing, as they themſelves repreſented matter to be. They limited the divine omnipotence, and could not maintain it in its juſt extent: ſince upon their ſcheme God could neither create nor annihilate matter, but could only change or vary its forms. Nor can I ſee how they could conſiſtently ſuppoſe, that he had a power even of doing this. For if matter exiſted from everlaſting by a neceſſity of nature, it muſt be uncauſed and independent. And on this ſuppoſition it is hard to conceive, how he ſhould have ſuch power over it, as not only to put it in motion out of its natural ſtate of reſt, but to change, faſhion, and model it according to his own will, as he muſt do in forming the univerſe (*b*). Many of thoſe who maintained that hypotheſis, ſuppoſed,

(*b*) Thoſe that hold matter to be uncreated, eternal, and neceſſarily exiſtent, did in effect aſcribe to it the moſt eſſential and fundamental attribute of the Deity. Plato calls God the τὸ ὄν, as being that which properly is or exiſts. For, as Cicero obſerves, Plato would not allow any thing which hath a beginning and ending, to have a real being and exiſtence; and aſſerts that that only is or exiſts which is always ſuch. "Nihil Plato putat eſſe quod oriatur et intereat; idque "ſolum eſſe quod ſemper tale ſit." Tuſcul. Diſp. lib. i. cap. 24. Plutarch has ſome noble ſpeculations on this ſubject in his tract on the word EI inſcribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi. He ſhews that it cannot be ſo properly ſaid of God, that

ſuppoſed, that matter might in ſeveral reſpects not be duly obſequious to his operations: and that through the ineptitude of the materials, he might not be able to order things as he would, but only did the beſt the matter he worked upon would allow him to do. This is hinted in thoſe queries propoſed by Seneca. "Quantum Deus poſſit? Materiam ipſe ſibi formet, an datâ "utatur? Utrum Deus quicquid vult, officiat, an in multis rebus "illum tractanda deſtituant, et a magno artifice pravè formentur "multa, non quia ceſſat ars, ſed quia id in quo exercetur ſæpe "inobſequens arti eſt? (*i*)."—i. e. "How far the power of God "extends? Whether he formed the matter for himſelf, or "maketh uſe of it when provided for him? Whether God can "effect whatſoever he willeth; or in many things the materials "he is to work with diſappoint him? Whereby it comes to paſs, "that many things are ill framed by the Great Artificer; not that "his art is deficient, but becauſe that which it is exerciſed upon "often proves ſtubborn and untractable to his art?" Accordingly many of the philoſophers, and particularly the Stoics, reſolved the origin and cauſe of evil into the contumaciouſneſs and perverſity of matter; though, as Plutarch argues againſt

that he was or will be, as that he is; that this ſignifies that he is the ſame eternal, independent, immutable being, the only being that has a true and ſtable exiſtence. How he and other philoſophers could, in conſiſtency with this, hold matter to be eternal and uncreated, and yet mutable, the ſubject of ſo many changes, is hard to ſee. Thoſe philoſophers, though otherwiſe very abſurd, were more conſiſtent with themſelves, who holding matter to be eternal, maintained that it was immovable and invariable, and that all the mutations we ſee in it are nothing in reality, but are appearances only.

(*i*) Seneca Quæſt. Nat. lib. i. in procemio.

them,

them, it is abſurd to imagine that matter, which they ſuppoſed to be void of all quality, could be the cauſe of evil (*k*).

Indeed the later Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, who lived after Chriſtianity had been for ſome time publiſhed to the world, Plotinus, Iamblicus, Proclus, and others, held, that matter was not abſolutely ſelf-exiſtent, but owed its exiſtence to God as the original cauſe: but even they did not admit a proper creation of matter. They would not allow that the world had a beginning, but ſuppoſed it to have proceeded eternally from God by way of emanation or eradiation, as light from the ſun.

And this leads to another inſtance in which the philoſophers perverted the antient tradition, and inſtead of improving in divine knowledge, fell from the original truth derived from the firſt ages. The Pagans had, as was obſerved before, a traditionary account that the world had a beginning, and that it was created by God. This doctrine, as far as it related to the world's having had a beginning, obtained among the antient Egyptians, as Laertius informs us from Hetatæus and Ariſtagoras. In this they were followed by the moſt antient of the Greek theologues and philoſophers. But though both the one and the other acknowledged the temporary beginning of the world, as Epicurus did afterwards, they dropped that part of the antient tradition which was of principal importance, viz. that the world was made by God. Anaxagoras agreed with them, that the world had a be-

(*k*) Plut. Pſychogon. Oper. tom. ii. p. 1014, 1015.

ginning:

ginning: but then he aſcribed the formation of it to an intelligent mind: yet this, according to him, was only a putting that rude and diſorderly maſs of matter, which he ſuppoſed to be eternal, into order, and diſpoſing it into the preſent ſyſtem. The famous Ariſtotle was not ſatisfied with this, but entirely rejected the antient traditionary accounts of the temporary origin of the world, and maintaied it to be eternal both as to matter and form. He ſays, all the philoſophers before him aſſerted that the world had a beginning (*l*). So they did for the moſt part, but it is not true of them all. Ocellus Lucanus, the Pythagorean, who lived before Ariſtotle, argued for the eternity of the world, as appears from his book of the nature of the univerſe, ſtill extant. Xenophanes is mentioned by Plutarch as of the ſame opinion (*m*). And Stobæus imputes this opinion to ſome others of the Greek philoſophers before the time of Ariſtotle. The antient Chaldæans, according to Diodorus Siculus, held that the world is eternal, and was neither generated, nor is liable to corruption: though this cannot be true of all the Chaldæans, if what Biroſus, their own hiſtorian, ſaith of them be true, that they ſuppoſed Bel to be the maker of heaven and earth; which probably was at firſt the name of the true God, but afterwards became the name of an idol; being confounded with the ſun, and with the hero Belus, one of their firſt kings. Maimonides tells us concerning the antient Zabians, that they held the eternity of the world. And among the Greek philoſophers, from the time of Ariſtotle, it became the

(*l*) Ariſt. De Cœlo, lib. i. cap. 10.

(*m*) De Placit. Philoſ. lib. ii. cap. 4. Opera, tom. ii. p. 886.

(*n*) Eclog. Phyſ. lib. i. cap. 24. p. 44. Edit. Plantin.

favourite

favourite opinion. It was maintained not only by the Peripatetics, but by all the later Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, Plotinus, Apuleius, Iamblicus, Alcinous, Proclus, who affirmed, as was hinted before, that the world came from God, as light from the ſun. They held indeed, that both the ſubſtance and form of matter depended upon the Deity; that therefore it was not ſelf-exiſtent, and could no more ſubſiſt without God, nor ſeparately from him, than light without the ſun: but then it followed alſo, that God could not be without the world, any more than the ſun can be without its light: that it is a neceſſary emanation or efflux from him, and does not depend upon the free determinations of his own will.

It is true that they argued, as Ariſtotle had done before them, from the eſſential activity and benignity of the Divine Nature, which muſt have been from eternity in action: and upon this principle they maintained, that both the corporeal world, with all things in it, exiſted from all eternity, and that the ſouls of men and all other animals were eternal too, without beginning: and that they were co-æval with God, who was indeed before them in order of nature, but not of time. But if God be a wiſe and free agent, the particular communications and effects of his power and goodneſs, muſt depend upon what ſeemeth moſt fit to his infinite wiſdom, and upon the counſels and free purpoſes of his own mind and will: and on that ſuppoſition the eternity of the world could not be rightly argued from the eternity of the Divine power and goodneſs. Indeed it cannot be conſiſtently maintained, but upon this principle, that God is a neceſſary agent, and that all things

things proceed from him by a neceſſity of nature. For then the world muſt be eternal, and not only ſo, but muſt neceſſarily exiſt as well as he. And indeed the doctrine of theſe philoſophers naturally led to the Spinoſan ſcheme, and terminated in it; the fundamental principle of which is, that all things proceed from God by way of neceſſary emanation, not of creation; or are the neceſſary modifications of his infinite eſſence: a ſcheme which confounds God and the creature, and, purſued to its genuine conſequences, is ſubverſive of all religion and morality.

The next thing I ſhall mention as a farther proof of the wrong notions of the Deity which obtained among the Heathen philoſophers, and which hath a near affinity with what hath been now obſerved, is, that many of the moſt celebrated philoſophers held the whole animated ſyſtem of the world, and eſpecially the ſoul of it, to be God. This, according to Plutarch, was the doctrine of the antient Egyptians, who tells us from Hecatæus, that they accounted the firſt God to be the ſame with the "τὸ πᾶν—or the "univerſe." "Τὸν πρωτὸν θεὸν τῷ πάντι τὸν αὐτὸν νομιζουσι(o)." To this probably refers the famous inſcription on the temple of Iſis, "I am all that hath been, is, or ſhall be." It was a noted maxim, as Dr. Cudworth hath ſhewn, both of the Egyptian and Orphic ſchools, and maintained by the moſt eminent philoſophers, that God is one and all things. I will not deny what the learned Doctor aſſerts, that this might at firſt be intended in a favourable ſenſe, and might ſignify no more than that the divine

(o) Plut. De Iſid. et Oſir. Oper. tom. ii. p. 354. D.

eſſence is diffuſed through all things, and that God is the cauſe of all things, and virtually containeth all things in himſelf. It is thus that he explains that paſſage of Ariſtotle in his Metaphyſics, where he ſpeaks of ſome "who pronounced concerning the "whole univerſe as being but one nature." "That is," ſaith the Doctor, "as virtually containing all things." But this ſeems to be only his own gloſs upon it. The words in Ariſtotle are more naturally expreſſive of an opinion like that of Spinoſa, that there is but one ſubſtance in the univerſe. But whatever might have been the original intention of that maxim, that God is one and all things, it was, by the learned Doctor's own acknowledgment, greatly perverted and abuſed, and gave occaſion to their confounding God and the creature in their worſhip. He obſerves, that it was the miſtake and abuſe of this one maxim, which was the chief ground both of the ſeeming and real polytheiſm, not only of the Greeks and Europeans, but alſo of the Egyptians and other Pagans; they concluding, that becauſe God was all things, and conſequently all things God, that therefore he ought to be worſhipped in all things, in all the ſeveral parts of the world, and things of nature (*p*).

This

(*p*) Agreeable to this is what we are told concerning the Chineſe, that it is a principle univerſally received among them, and maintained by the three principal ſects of China, eſpecially by thoſe of the learned ſect, antient and modern, That all things are the ſame, one univerſal ſubſtance, only diſtinguiſhed by accidental forms and qualities. Upon this principle they ſacrifice to particular beings, as parts of the univerſal ſubſtance, to heaven, earth, mountains, rivers, &c. F. Longobardi gives an inſtance in one of their learned doctors T. V. Puen Su, who ſaid, he mght well adore the diſh of *cha* or *tea* he then held in his hand, as knowing that *tai kie*, [i. e. the univerſal ſubſtance] was in it, after the ſame manner that it is in heaven, and in all other parts of the world. And F. Navarette in his notes on Longobardi's treatiſe

This learned writer indeed will not allow, that the Egyptians held the material world, that is, as he explains it, the world conſidered as inanimate, to be the firſt and chief God: but it follows from his own account of them, that they held the whole animated ſyſtem of the world to be God: or, as he expreſſeth it, "they "took the whole ſyſtem of things, God and the world together, "as one Deity." He obſerves, that "the τὸ πᾶν—or univerſe, "was frequently taken by the Pagan theologers in a comprehen-"ſive ſenſe for the Deity with all the extent of its fecundity, or "God as diſplaying himſelf in the world, or for God and the "world both together, the latter being looked upon as nothing "but an efflux or emanation from the former." He adds, "that "the god Pan among the Greeks and Barbarians was underſtood "in this ſenſe: and that Ζεὺς and Pan, according to Diodorus "Siculus, were only two different names of the ſame deity." And ſpeaking of thoſe Pagans who acknowledged no higher numen than the ſoul of the world, he ſaith, "that as they ſuppoſed the "whole corporeal world animated to be alſo the Supreme Deity; "from thence it plainly followed, that the ſeveral parts and "members of the world muſt be parts and members of God (*q*).

This notion ſeems to have been very generally received among the more learned Pagans. That eminent antiquary Varro, ſpeak-

tiſe ſays, that this Chineſe maxim, that all things are one and the ſame, is ſo plain in their books, and ſo often repeated, that there can be no doubt of it. See Longobardi's treatiſe with the notes upon it in the fifth book of Navarette's account of the empire of China, in the firſt volume of Churchill's Collection, &c. p. 181. 184. 185. 191.

(*q*) Cudworth's Intel. Syſtem, p. 343, 344. 533.

ing of what he eſteemed the natural and true theology, gives it as his own opinion, that " God is the ſoul of the world, and that " this world is itſelf God—Deum ſe arbitrari eſſe animam mundi, " et hunc ipſum mundum eſſe Deum (*r*)." And to this ſenſe he interprets the celebrated verſes of Valerius Soranus :

" Jupiter Omnipotens, regum, rerumque, deûmque
" Progenitor, Genitrixque deûm, Deus unus et omnis (*s*).

In theſe verſes Jupiter the Omnipotent is repreſented as the Father of kings, of things, and of gods, the Mother of the gods, one God and all gods. This Varro underſtands of the world, or the univerſe. Agreeable to which is that of Iarchas the bramin to Apollonius : that " the world is an animal ; for it generateth all " things, and is both of a male and female nature, performing " the part both of father and mother." The ſame notion runs through many of the verſes aſcribed to Orpheus. The reader may ſee many other teſtimonies of the antients concerning the world's being God, collected by the learned Gataker, in his Annotations on Marcus Antoninus, p. 145, 146. So much were the Heathens poſſeſſed with this notion, that becauſe the Jews worſhipped no images, and performed their adorations to the Deity with hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, they concluded, that they took heaven and the world to be God. Thus Strabo, who is generally an exact and judicious writer, praiſing Moſes for his religious ſentiments of God, ſaith, he affirmed " this one thing only to be

(*r*) Apud Auguſtin. De Civ. Dei. lib. vii. cap. 9. p. 131.

(*s*) So it is in the Benedictine edition ; in other editions the latter clauſe of the firſt line runs, " Regum rex ipſe Deûmque."

" God,

" God, which containeth us all, and the earth and ſea, which " we call heaven, and the world, and the nature of the whole.— " ἓν τοῦτο μόνον θεὸν, τὸ περιέχον ἡμᾶς ἅπανλας, καὶ γὴν, καὶ θάλατλαν, " ὃ καλοῦμεν οὐρανὸν, καὶ κόσμον, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὅλων φύσιν (*t*)." Diodorus Siculus, as cited by Photius, expreſſeth himſelf to the ſame purpoſe (*u*).

But none were more ſtrenuous aſſerters of this notion than the Stoics. Arius Didymus, quoted by Euſebius, ſaith concerning the Stoics, that " they call the whole world with all its parts God, " and that this is one only.—ὅλον τὸν κόσμον σὺν τοῖς ἑαυλοῦ μέρεσι " προσαγορευσι θεὸν, τοῦτον δὲ ἕνα μόνον εἶναι (*x*)." Laertius in his life of Zeno explains the doctrine of the Stoics thus, that they maintained, that " the world is governed by mind and provi- " dence: and that this mind paſſeth through every part of it, as " the ſoul doth in us: which yet doth not act in all parts alike, " but in ſome more, in ſome leſs.—And that the whole world " being a living and rational animal hath, like our ſouls, its he- " gemonical or principal part (*y*)." Though they held the whole animated world to be God, yet they ſuppoſed that the ſoul of the world acted principally in one eminent part of it, which ſometimes they called God, by way of eminency; tho' what this was they were not agreed. Zeno, as Velleius in Cicero informs us, ſaid

(*t*) Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 1014. Edit. Amſtel. 1707.

(*u*) Ap. Phot. Biblioth. cod. 244.

(*x*) Præpar. Evangel. lib. xv. cap. 15. p. 817.

(*y*) Laert. in Zen. lib. vii. ſegm. 138, 139.

that

that the æther was God (*z*). Chryſippus, according to Laertius, varied, ſometimes making it the æther, ſometimes the heaven. But Cleanthes, according to the ſame author, held it to be the ſun (*a*). This is alſo what Cicero obſerves in his Academics, where he concludes, that "by this diſagreement among the wiſe "we are compelled to be ignorant who is the Lord over us, ſince "we know not whether we ſerve the ſun or the æther." "Zenoni "et reliquis ferè Stoicis æther videtur ſummus deus, mente præ-"ditus quâ omnia regantur. Cleanthes—Solem dominari et re-"rum potiri putat. Ita cogimur diſſenſione ſapientum domi-"num noſtrum ignorare, quippe qui neſciamus, ſoli an ætheri ſer-"viamus (*b*)." Plutarch repreſents the opinion of the Stoics thus, that "they define the eſſence of God to be a fiery ſpirit "endued with intelligence, or, as he elſewhere calls it, a tech-"nical fire—πῦρ τεχνικὸν, having no ſhape or form, but is "changed into whatever it pleaſes, and aſſimilates itſelf to all "things—That it pervadeth the whole world, and receiveth "various denominations from the various changes of the mat-"ter through which it paſſeth; and that the world is God, "and ſo are the ſtars, and the earth, but eſpecially the Intellect "which is in the higheſt æther (*c*)."

"It

(*z*) De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 14.

(*a*) Laert. ubi ſupra.

(*b*) Academ. lib. ii. cap. 41.

(*c*) Plut. De Placit. Philoſ. lib. i. cap. 6. in the beginning, compared with cap. 7. at the latter end. Oper. tom. ii. p. 879. 882. Origen therefore does not carry it too far, when he charges the Stoics with holding, that God is corporeal, and that they do not ſcruple to ſay that he is mutable, and capable of all manner of variations.

It cannot but give one concern, to obſerve Balbus in Cicero, amidſt excellent reaſonings to prove the exiſtence and providence of the Deity from the beauty and order of the works of nature, gravely arguing, that the world is an animal, and hath intelligence, that it is happy, reaſonable, and wiſe, and that therefore the world is God. This he frequently repeats and inſiſts upon (*d*). And he argues alſo from the divinity of the world to that of the ſtars: and that they are animals, and have ſenſe and intelligence. From whence he concludes, that they are to be reckoned in the number of the gods (*e*). And he proves from the admirable order and conſtancy of their courſes and motions, that they themſelves have reaſon and underſtanding, and that they are moved by their own ſenſe and divinity (*f*). Thus they aſſerted the divinity of the world in their diſputes againſt atheiſm, and in proving the exiſtence of God, they argued upon the ſuppoſition of his being the ſoul of the world. So that their way of reaſoning againſt the Atheiſts and Epicureans was ſo managed as to eſtabliſh their own wrong ſyſtem, and lay a foundation for deifying and worſhipping the ſeveral parts of the univerſe.

variations. Cont. Celſ. lib. i. p. 17. And again, he ſays, they were unable to underſtand the true nature of God, as abſolutely incorruptible, ſimple, uncompounded, and indiviſible. Ibid. lib. iv. p. 169.

(*d*) " Sapientem eſſe mundum, ſimiliter beatum, ſimiliter æternum—nec mundo " quicquam melius, ex quo efficitur eſſe mundum Deum." De nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 8. et cap. 13, et ſeq.

(*e*) " Hac mundi divinitate perſpectâ, tribuenda eſt ſideribus eadem divinitas, ut " ea quoque rectiſſimè et animantia eſſe, et ſentire atque intelligere dicantur— " ex quo efficitur in Deorum numero aſtra eſſe ducenda." Ibid. cap. 15.

(*f*) " Sequitur ergò ut ipſa ſuâ ſponte, ſuo ſenſu, ac divinitate moveantur." Ibid. cap. 16, et cap. 21.

In conſequence of this their theology, they held that particular ſouls were parts of the divine univerſal ſoul, and viſible and corporeal things parts of his body. " Why ſhould you not think," ſays Seneca, " that he has ſome divine thing exiſting in him, who " is a part of God? This whole in which we are contained is " both one thing, and is God: we are both his fellows or com- " panions, and his members.—Quid eſt autem, cur non exiſtimes " in eo divini aliquid exiſtere, qui Dei pars eſt? Totum hoc quo " continemur, et unum eſt et Deus: et ſocii ejus ſumus et mem- " bra (*g*)." Marcus Antoninus often deſcribes God under the character

(*g*) This may perhaps be thought an extravagant flight of Seneca. But the ſame thing in effect is ſaid by that excellent philoſopher Epictetus. In anſwer to that queſtion, " How any one may be convinced, that each of his actions are under the inſpection of God? He inſiſts principally upon this, that " our ſouls are con- " nected and intimately joined to God, being μόρια καὶ ἀποσπάσματα θεῖ—members " and diſtinct portions of his eſſence." So Miſs Carter in her tranſlation well repreſents the ſenſe. " And muſt he not," adds Epictetus, " be ſenſible of every " movement of them, as belonging and being connatural to himſelf?" And he there afterwards repreſents God as " having made the ſun a ſmall part of himſelf, if com- " pared with the whole." Epict. Diſſert. lib. i. chap. 14. So alſo in his 2d book, chap. 8. ſ. 2. he repeats it, that " man is a diſtinct portion of the Divine Eſſence; " and repreſents him as containing a part of God in himſelf. And adviſes perſons to " conſider when they are feeding and exerciſing, that it is a God they feed, and a " God they exerciſe, and that they continually carry a God about with them." In like manner Marcus Antoninus, ſpeaking of the dæmon or genius, which Jupiter hath given to every man to be his leader and conducter, by which he means every man's rational ſoul, calls it ἀποσπάσμα ἰανῦ, which Gataker tranſlates " particulam " a ſe avulſam—a ſmall part plucked from himſelf." Anton. lib. v. ſ. 27. The note upon this paſſage in the Glaſgow tranſlation of Antoninus's Meditations is this, that " the Stoics conceived the Divine Subſtance to be an infinitely diffuſed and all- " pervading æther, the ſeat of all wiſdom, power, and goodneſs; and that our " ſouls were ſmall particles of this æther; and that even thoſe of brutes were par- " ticles of the ſame, more immerſed and intangled in the groſſer elements." Antoninus elſewhere repreſents the ſoul as ἀπόῤῥοια, an efflux or emanation from the Governor

character of " the nature of the whole." See to this purpoſe lib. v. ſ. 10. lib. ix. ſ. 1. and other places. And he addreſſes his prayer to the world, lib. iv. ſ. 23. " Whatſoever is agreeable to " thee, O comely world, is agreeable to me.—πᾶν μοὶ συναρμόζει " ὃ σοὶ, εὐάρεστον ἔστι ὦ κόσμε." And he adds, " Every thing is " acceptable fruit to me, which thy ſeaſons, O nature, bear. " From thee are all things, in thee all things ſubſiſt, to thee all " things return." By the world here, and in other places, he eſpecially underſtands the ſoul of the world, which the Stoics made the principal governing part. St. Auſtin having mentioned Varro's opinion, that the world is God, adds by way of explication as from Varro himſelf, that " as a wiſe man, though conſiſting of body and ſoul, is denominated wiſe from his ſoul, ſo " though the world conſiſteth of body as well as ſoul, yet it is " from the ſoul that it is called God.—Sicut hominem ſapientem, " cum ſit ex corpore et animo, tamen ab animo dici ſapientem " ita mundum dici Deum ab animo, cum ſit ex animo et

Governor of the world. Lib. ii. ſ. 4. And he calls every man's mind or rational ſoul the Divinity within him, and the God within him. Lib. ii. ſ. 13. lib. iii. ſ. 5. et 16. lib. v. ſ. 10. Seneca frequently uſes the ſame manner of expreſſion. But this was far from being a doctrine peculiar to the Stoics. It was ſhewn before that it was the avowed doctrine of Pythagoras and all the Pythagoreans. See above p. 287. And Cicero ſeems to repreſent it as the general opinion of the wiſeſt and moſt learned men, " A quâ [Naturâ Deorum] ut doctiſſimis ſapientiſſimiſque " placuit, hauſtos animos et libatos habemus." De Divinat. lib. i. cap. 49. To this Horace refers, when he calls the ſoul " divinæ particulam auræ." And Virgil in thoſe noted verſes of his Georgic, lib. iv. verſ. 220, et ſeq. and Æneid, lib. vi. verſ. 724, et ſeq. Plato has ſeveral paſſages that ſeem to look this way, as the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes has ſhewn; but it muſt be alſo acknowledged that there are other paſſages in his works which have a contrary appearance.

" corpore (*b*)." Lactantius's cenſure upon theſe philoſophers is certainly very juſt. That " under the name of nature they com-" prehend things which are entirely different from one another, " God and the world, the artificer and his workmanſhip; and " ſay that the one can do nothing without the other: as if nature " were God and the world mixed together; for ſometimes they " ſo confound them, as to make God to be the ſoul of the " world, and the world to be the body of God.—Naturæ nomine " res diverſiſſimas comprehendunt, Deum et mundum; artificem " et opus: dicuntque alterum ſine altero nihil poſſe: tanquam " natura ſit Deus mundo permixtus: nam interdum ſic con-" fundunt, ut ſit Deus ipſa mens mundi, et mundus ſit corpus " Dei."

It were well if the abſurdity of this way of philoſophizing were the worſt of it. But beſides that it gave occaſion to ſome of thoſe extravagant flights of the Stoics, ſo unbecoming dependent creatures, as if they had a divinity and ſufficiency in themſeves, which placed them in ſeveral reſpects on an equality with God; this notion was made uſe of for ſupporting the Pagan idolatry, and was therefore of the moſt pernicious conſequence to the intereſts of religion. For upon this principle, as was hinted before, they deified the ſeveral parts of the world, and things of nature, and worſhipped them as gods or parts of God. Cicero in his Academics gives this repreſentation of the ſentiments of the Stoics: that they held, that " this world is wiſe, and hath a mind or

(*b*) Ap. Auguſt. de Civit. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 6. p. 129, et ibid. cap. 9. p. 131.

" ſoul,

" ſoul, whereby it formed or fabricated both it and itſelf (*i*), " and ordereth, moveth, and governeth all things: and that the " ſun, moon, all the ſtars, the earth and ſea are gods; becauſe a " certain animal intelligence pervadeth and paſſeth through all " things.—Hunc mundum eſſe ſapientem, habere mentem, quâ " et ſe et ipſum fabricata ſit, et omnia moderetur, moveat, regat, " erit perſuaſum etiam ſolem, lunam, ſtellas omnes, terram, mare, " Deos eſſe: quod quædam animalis intelligentia per omnia per- " meat et tranſeat (*k*)." In like manner the great and learned Varro expreſly ſays, that " the ſoul of the world, and its parts, are " the true Gods:" and repreſents this as the ſentiment of thoſe who had the juſteſt notions, and were acquainted with the ſecrets of learning. " Dicit Varro antiquos ſimulacra Deorum, et inſignia, orna- " tuſque finxiſſe; quæ, cum oculis animadvertiſſent hi qui adeſſent " doctrinæ myſteria, poſſent animam mundi ac partes ejus, id eſt, " veros Deos, animo videre (*l*)." Thus it appears, that the one God of theſe philoſophers was really an aggregate of deities. The unity of God they pleaded for was the unity of the world, which conſiſteth of innumerable parts: and accordingly the great ſtoical argument to prove that there is one God was, that there is but one world; but this one Divinity was multiplied into as many gods as there were parts of the world, all animated by the ſame univerſal ſoul, and all of them parts of the one God. This theo-

(*i*) This way of talking, as if God made himſelf, though very improper and abſurd, was uſed not only by the Stoics, but by Plato and others of the philoſophers.

(*k*) Cic. Academ. lib. ii. cap. 37.

(*l*) Ap. Auguſt. De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 5. p. 128.

logy or philoſophy therefore furniſhed a pretext for worſhipping the ſeveral parts of the world, and the powers and virtues diffuſed through the parts of it, under the name of the popular divinities (*m*). And thus, inſtead of curing the popular ſuperſtition and polytheiſm, they confirmed and eſtabliſhed it, and, as Plutarch charges the Stoics, filled the air, heaven, earth, and ſea with gods (*n*).

Even after Chriſtianity had ſpread abroad its ſalutary light, ſome of the moſt eminent Pagan philoſophers made uſe of this very notion to juſtify the Heathen polytheiſm. The celebrated Plotinus, ſpeaking of the ſoul of the world, ſaith, that "by this," [i. e. by its ſoul] "the world is a God: and the ſun is alſo a "God, becauſe animated, and ſo are the other ſtars.—διὰ ταύτην "ὁ κόσμος ὁδε θεὸς, ἔστι δε καὶ ἥλιος θεὸς, ὅτι ἔμψυχος, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα "ἄστρα (*o*)." Proclus has a long diſpute to prove, that not only the ſtars are animated, but alſo all the other ſublunary bodies or elements. "If the world," ſays he, "be a happy God, then "none of the parts of it are godleſs, or devoid of providence." And he goes on to ſhew, that they partake of the Divinity of the whole (*p*).

(*m*) Thus St. Auſtin ſpeaking of what were called the Dii majorum Gentium, Jupiter, Juno, Saturn, Neptune, Vulcan, Veſta, and others, obſerves, "that Varro "endeavoured to apply them to the elements and parts of the world.—Quos Varro "conatur ad mundi partes ſive elementa transferre." De Civ. Dei, lib. viii. cap. 5.

(*n*) De Commun. Notit. adverſ. Stoicos, tom. ii. p. 1275.

(*o*) Ennead. lib. v. cap. 2. p. 483. E.

(*p*) Proclus in Tim. Plat. lib. iv. apud Cudw. Intel. Syſt. p. 237.

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It is a juſt obſervation of the learned Dr. Cudworth concerning the latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, that " in their philoſophy " they deſignedly laid a foundation for their polytheiſm and " creature-worſhip, that is, for their coſmolatry, aſtrolatry, and " dæmonolatry." [Their idolatrous worſhip of the world, of the ſtars, and of dæmons.] Intel. Syſt. p. 593. And having ſhewn, that " the world was to ſome of them the body, to other the " temple of God; and in either ſenſe to be worſhipped," he adds, " Thus we ſee that the Pagans were univerſally coſmolatræ, " or world-worſhippers, in one ſenſe or other; not that they " worſhipped the world as a dead inanimate thing, but either as " the body of God, or as the temple or image of God." But he obſerves, that " neither of them terminated their worſhip in that " which was ſenſible or viſible only, but in that great mind or " ſoul, which framed and governeth the whole world under- " ſtandingly." Ibid. p. 538, 539. And he had ſaid before concerning thoſe who held God to be the ſoul of the world, that " they worſhipped the ſeveral parts and members of the world, " not as being themſelves ſo many gods, but as parts of one " God, or as his powers and virtues, as making up one God in " the whole, which yet might be worſhipped in its ſeveral " parts (*q*)." Ibid. p. 536, 537. To the ſame purpoſe he elſewhere tells us, that " theſe perſonated and deified things of nature, were " not themſelves properly and directly worſhipped by the intelli-

(*q*) It is however to be obſerved, that they ſo explained this matter, that theſe ſeveral parts of God were each of them to be regarded and worſhipped as ſo many particular deities, or diſtinct gods and goddeſſes, as the learned Doctor himſelf ſometimes acknowledges.

" gent

" gent Pagans (who acknowledged no inanimate thing for a " God) ſo as to terminate their worſhip ultimately in them; but " either relatively only to the Supreme God, or elſe at moſt in a " way of complication with him, whoſe effects and images they " are; that they were not ſo much themſelves worſhipped, as " God was worſhipped in them." Ibid. p. 515. This is the moſt plauſible thing that can poſſibly be ſaid for them, and is the pretence which has been made uſe of by the ableſt and moſt refined apologiſts for idolatry in all ages: and yet it is an apology which, if it had any force, might be extended to vindicate the paying religious worſhip to every thing in nature, under pretence of worſhipping God in it. And whereas it is here ſaid, that at moſt they only worſhipped the things of nature " in a way of " complication with God, whoſe effects and images they are," what is this but to ſay, that in their worſhip they mixed and confounded the creature with the Creator? And accordingly they arrived to that pitch of extravagance, as the Doctor owns, " as to " call every thing by the name of God, and God by the name of " every thing." This excellent writer himſelf, though he ſometimes ſeems willing to apologize for the Pagan idolatry, yet has paſſed this juſt cenſure upon it. That " the Pagans did not wor- " ſhip God according to his ſingular and incommunicable, his " peerleſs and incomprehenſible nature, but mingled creature- " worſhip with the worſhip of the Creator. And that the wor- " ſhipping God in his various gifts and effects under perſonal " names, is a thing in itſelf abſurd, and may alſo prove a great " inlet to atheiſm, when the things themſelves come to be called " by thoſe names; as if the good things of nature were the only

" deities. To worſhip the corporeal world as the one Supreme " God, and the ſeveral parts of it as members of God, is plainly " to confound God and the creature, and not to worſhip him as " the Creator, and according to his ſeparate nature (*r*)."

It appears from the obſervations which have been made, how ſtrangely the philoſophers, even thoſe of them that were moſt celebrated and admired, were loſt and bewildered in their own reaſonings, in things of the higheſt importance: and conſequently how unfit they were to guide the people in religion, and to recover them from their idolatry and polytheiſm. This furniſhes a manifeſt and convincing proof of the weakneſs of human reaſon when left to itſelf in theſe matters, and of the deluſions of *ſcience falſly ſo called*. It was therefore upon the juſteſt grounds, that the apoſtle gave that caution, " Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through " philoſophy and vain deceit."

(*r*) See the contents prefixed by him to his ivth chapter, ſect. lvii. This was what this learned writer propoſed particularly to ſhew, and it is a pity that he did not accompliſh this part of his great work.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

The greateſt and beſt of the antient Pagan philoſophers generally expreſſed themſelves in the polytheiſtic ſtrain; and, inſtead of leading the people to the one true God, they ſpoke of a plurality of gods, even in their moſt ſerious diſcourſes. They aſcribed thoſe works to the gods, and directed thoſe duties to be rendered to them, which properly belong to the Supreme.

ANOTHER thing to be obſerved concerning the antient Pagan philoſophers, and which ſhews how improper they were to bring the people to a right knowledge of God and religion, and to turn them from their ſuperſtition and idolatry, is, that they generally fell into the common language of polytheiſm, and talked as much of the gods as any of the people, and this even in their moſt ſerious diſcourſes. Inſtead of urging the worſhip of the one true God, and endeavouring to preſerve on the minds of men a ſenſe of the infinite diſtance between him and all other beings whatſoever, they recommended to the veneration of the people a plurality of deities, to whom they gave thoſe peculiar attributes and honours which were due to him alone. Zaleucus the Locrian, who may be regarded as having been a wiſe philoſopher as well as lawgiver, in his celebrated procœmium or preface to his laws, where he argues from the evidences of the divine powers, wiſdom, and goodneſs, in the orderly diſpoſition of things

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in the univerſe, does not lead the people to the acknowledgment of the one true Supreme God, but of a plurality of gods. See the paſſage quoted above, chap. 2d, p. 84. to which I now add, that he afterwards goes on to urge it upon them as their duty " to remember the gods, both that they really exiſt, and that " they inflict judgments upon unrighteous perſons (*a*)." To the ſame purpoſe Archytas, a celebrated Pythagorean, in the fragments of his work De Lege, preſerved by Stobæus, delivers himſelf in this manner, that " the firſt law of the conſtitution ſhould " be for the ſupport of what relates to the gods, the dæmons, and " our parents." The learned Biſhop of Glouceſter, who takes notice of this, obſerves, that " in like manner, if we may believe " antiquity, all their civil inſtitutes were prefaced; its conſtant " phraſe being, when ſpeaking of a legiſlator, διεκόσμει τὴν πολι- " τείαν ἀπο θεῶν ἀρχόμενος (*b*).—He ſet in order the polity, be- " ginning from the gods."

It has been already obſerved concerning that beſt of the antient philoſophers Socrates, that in thoſe excellent diſcourſes of his with Ariſtodemus and Euthydemus, in which he treats particularly of religion and the Deity, he all along ſpeaks of God and the gods promiſcuouſly, as the authors of the human frame, and of all the good things we enjoy. And to this probably Velleius in Cicero refers, when he blames Xenophon for introducing Socrates as mentioning now one, then many gods. " Modo unum, tum au-

(*a*) Apud Stob. ſerm. 42.

(*b*) Div. Leg. of Moſes, vol. i. p. 112. Edit. 4th.

" tèm plures deos (*c*)." The ſame Socrates ſpeaking of the unwritten laws, as he calls them, which are obſerved after the ſame manner in all places, and which he ſuppoſes not to have been made by men, ſince all men are not of one language, nor could meet together to conſult about them and enact them, but to have been given by the gods themſelves to mankind, mentions it in the firſt place as an univerſal law received among all men, " τὸν " θεὸν σέβειν—to worſhip the gods." As if it were the law of nature obligatory on all mankind to worſhip not one God only, but a plurality of deities. Xenophon mentions it to the praiſe of Socrates, that whereas " the οἱ πολλοὶ—the generality of men, " ſuppoſed that there are ſome things which the gods know, and " other things which they do not know, Socrates was of opinion " that the gods know all things, both the things which are ſaid, " and the things which are done, and even the things which are " deliberated upon in ſecret: and that they are every where pre- " ſent, and give ſignifications to men concerning all human af- " fairs (*d*)." A noble ſentence this, if applied to the one true God: but when applied to a multiplicity of gods, tended to miſlead the people, and to confirm them in their polytheiſm, as if there was a number of omniſcient, omnipreſent deities. The ſame obſervation may be made concerning a remarkable ſaying of Thales, mentioned by Laertius: being aſked, Whether a man in his unjuſt actions can eſcape the notice of the gods? He anſwered, No, not in his thoughts (*e*).

(*c*) De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 12.

(*d*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. iv. ſ. 19, p. 327. Edit. Sympſon.

(*e*) Laert. lib. i. ſegm. 36.

Plato

Plato in his arguings for the exiſtence of a Deity againſt the atheiſts, which he profeſſedly undertakes in his tenth book of laws, ſpeaks all along of gods in the plural. The point he ſets himſelf to prove in oppoſition to atheiſm, which he repreſents as at that time much prevailing, is not that there is one God, but that there are gods. And in the beginning of that book he introduces one of his dialogiſts as ſaying, "that it is eaſy to prove "the exiſtence of the gods: the earth, the ſun, the ſtars, and "the univerſe, and the well-ordered variety of ſeaſons, ſhew it: "as alſo the conſent both of Greeks and Barbarians, who all "agree that there are gods (*f*)." In like manner, when in the ſame tenth book of laws he argues for a Providence, what he undertakes to prove is, That the gods take care of mankind and their affairs, and do not neglect even ſmall matters (*g*). And in his Epinomis, or ſequel to his books of laws, he lays it down as a principle, ὡς ἐισὶ θεοὶ ἐπιμελούμενοι πάντων σμίκρων καὶ μεγάλων (*h*)." That "the gods exiſt, and take care of all things, both ſmall and "great." And in his whole diſputation on that ſubject it is the Providence of the gods that he aſſerts, and even of the gods which are appointed by the laws.

Cicero has many noble paſſages relating to the exiſtence of a Deity and a Providence. But they tend to lead the people not ſo much to the acknowledgment of the one Supreme God, as of a multiplicity of gods. Some notice was taken of this before in the

(*f*) Plato Oper. p. 664. E. Edit. Fic. Lugd. 1590.

(*g*) Ibid. p. 670, 671.

(*h*) Ibid. p. 700. E.

ſecond chapter of this work. To which I now add, that when he is ſpeaking of the conſent of nations, he ſeems to make it relate, as Plato had done before him, not to the belief of one Supreme Cauſe and Author of all things, but to a plurality of gods or divine powers. He obſerves, that " it is a ſtrong argument to " engage us to believe that there are gods, that there is no nation " ſo wild and ſavage, no man ſo rude and uncultivated, whoſe " mind is not embued with the opinion that there are gods. " Many have wrong ſentiments concerning the gods, but all think " there is a divine power and nature (*i*)." He adds, that " in " every thing the conſent of all nations is to be looked upon as " the law of nature.—Ut porrò firmiſſimum hoc adſerri videtur cur " deos eſſe credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium " tam ſit immanis, cujus mentem non imbuerit deorum opinio. " Multi de diis prava ſentiunt, omnes autèm eſſe vim et naturam " divinam arbitrantur——Omni autèm in re conſenſio omnium " gentium lex naturæ putanda eſt (*k*)." And again he ſays, that " it is as it were engraven on the minds of all men that there are " gods. What they are is not agreed, but that they are is denied " by none.—Omnibus innatum eſt, et animo quaſi inſculptum, " eſſe deos; quales ſint varium eſt; eſſe nemo negat (*l*)." And Cotta repreſents it as a thing in which all men agree, except thoſe that are very impious, and which could never be eraſed out of

(*i*) But then it is to be obſerved, that though all are here ſuppoſed to believe that there is a divine nature and power, yet many imagined that this divine nature and power reſided in a multitude of deities.

(*k*) Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. i. cap. 13.

(*l*) De nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 4.

his mind, that there are gods. " Quod inter omnes, niſi ad-
" modùm impios, convenit, mihi quidèm ex animo exuri non
" poteſt, eſſe deos (*m*)." Many other paſſages might be pro-
duced, in which the conſent of nations is urged to ſhew that there are gods (*n*). The ſame concluſion is drawn from the pulchritude and order of the univerſe, and other arguments uſually brought in proof of a Deity. Balbus the Stoic, in Cicero's ſecond book De naturâ Deorum, having mentioned ſome of thoſe arguments, ſays, that " he that conſiders them will be forced to
" confeſs, that there are gods.—Hæc et innumerabilia ex eodem
" genere qui videat, nonne cogitur profiteri deos eſſe?" He expreſſes himſelf to the ſame purpoſe in ſeveral other parts of that book. Thus, as was before obſerved, their very diſputes againſt atheiſm were ſo managed, as to uphold and maintain the public polytheiſm, and were not ſo much directed to prove that there is one Supreme God, as that there are many gods; all of whom are to be honoured and adored. When Balbus ſets himſelf to ſhew that the world is governed by Divine Providence, which he does admirably well, what he propoſes to prove is, that it is by the providence of the gods that the world is adminiſtered and governed. " Deorum providentiâ mundum adminiſtrari (*o*)." And again, that the world and all its parts were conſtituted in the be-

(*m*) De nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 3.

(*n*) There is a remarkable paſſage of Seneca to the ſame purpoſe in the beginning of his 117th epiſtle. " Apud nos veritatis argumentum eſt aliquid omnibus videri:
" tanquàm deos eſſe inter alia ſic colligimus, quod omnibus de Diis opinio inſita
" eſt, nec ulla gens uſquàm eſt adeo extra leges moreſque projecta, ut non aliquos
" deos credat."

(*o*) De nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 29. p. 175. Edit. Davis, 2da.

ginning,

ginning, and are at all times adminiſtered and governed by the providence of the gods. " Dico igitur providentiâ deorum, mun-
" dum et omnes mundi partes, et initio conſtitutas eſſe, et omni
" tempore adminiſtrari (*p*)." To the ſame purpoſe Cicero obſerves, in his firſt book of laws, that " all nature is governed by the
" power, reaſon, authority, mind, divinity of the immortal
" gods.—Deorum immortalium, vi, ratione, poteſtate, mente,
" numine naturam omnem regi (*q*)." And in his ſecond book of laws he lays it down as a principle, that " the citizens ſhould
" in the firſt place be perſuaded, that the gods are the lords and
" orderers of all things, and that whatſoever things are done in the
" world are done and directed by their divine power and authority:
" that they deſerve highly of the whole human race, and dili-
" gently inſpect what every man is, what he does, what ſecret
" faults he is guilty of, with what diſpoſitions of mind and what
" degree of piety he exerciſeth himſelf in the offices of religion;
" and that they take an account both of good and bad men.
" For," ſays he, " the minds that have imbibed theſe ſentiments
" will not deviate far from that way of thinking which is both
" profitable and true.—Sit hoc jam in principio perſuaſum civi-
" bus, dominos eſſe omnium rerum et moderatores deos: ea-
" que quæ geruntur eorum geri ditione et numine; eoſdemque
" optimè de genere hominum mereri, et quales quiſque ſit, quid
" agat, quid in ſe admittat, quâ mente, quâ pietate colat reli-
" giones, intueri; piorumque et impiorum habere rationem.
" His enim rebus imbutæ mentes haud ſanè abhorrebunt ab utili

(*p*) De nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 29. p. 177.

(*q*) De Leg. lib. i. cap. 7. p. 25. Edit. Davis, 4ta.

" ac

" ac verâ ſententiâ (*r*)." To theſe may be added a fine paſſage of Balbus in Cicero's ſecond book of the Nature of the Gods, which would have been admirable, if he had applied it to the worſhip of the one true God. " The beſt worſhip of the gods," ſaith he, " and which is at the ſame time the moſt chaſte, holy, and full of " piety, is that with a pure, upright, incorrupt mind and voice " we ſhould render them the veneration which is due.—Cultus " deorum eſt optimus, idemque caſtiſſimus atque ſanctiſſimus, " pleniſſimuſque pietatis, ut eos purâ, integrâ, incorruptâ et " mente et voce veneremur (*s*)." Such was the language of the wiſeſt and beſt of the antient Pagan philoſophers. They generally ſpoke not of one God only, but of the gods; and if they ſometimes mentioned God in the ſingular, as Cicero talks of " aliquis " effector aut moderator tanti operis," they aſcribe no more to him than they do at other times to the gods in the plural; as if there were many that ſhared with him in the Divinity, and were, along with him, " domini omnium rerum et moderatores—the " lords and governors of all things:" And accordingly it is uſual with them to ſpeak of God and the gods promiſcuouſly; which tended to encourage and confirm the people in their idolatry and polytheiſm. It is true, that after Chriſtianity had diffuſed its glorious light, the notion of the one Supreme God became more familiar to the Heathens, and many even of the vulgar were more ſenſible of the vanity of polytheiſm. The philoſophers alſo aſſerted the one Supreme Deity more clearly and fully than they had done before. And yet they ſtill continued to expreſs themſelves in a

(*r*) De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 7. p. 94, 95.

(*s*) De nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 28. p. 174.

manner

manner which had a tendency to uphold and maintain the common eſtabliſhed polytheiſm and idolatry, derived to them from their anceſtors. I ſhall on this occaſion take particular notice of two very eminent philoſophers, both of whom flouriſhed after Chriſtianity had made ſome progreſs in the world, Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus.

I ſhall begin with Epictetus. He often uſes the word God in the ſingular number, and yet frequently falls into the polytheiſtical manner of expreſſion. "Be aſſured," ſays he in his Enchiridion (*t*), "that the eſſential property of piety towards the gods "is to form right opinions concerning them, as exiſting and go- "verning the univerſe with goodneſs and juſtice. And fix your- "ſelf in this reſolution to obey them, and willingly to follow "them in all events, as produced by the moſt perfect under- "ſtanding: for thus you will never find fault with the gods, nor "accuſe them as neglecting you (*u*)." Here he makes true piety to conſiſt in entertaining right notions of the gods, and in obeying and following them: and he repreſents the gods as governing the world with the moſt perfect underſtanding, juſtice, and goodneſs. With this may be compared an admired paſſage in his Diſſertations. "The philoſophers ſay, that we are firſt to learn that "there is a god, and that his Providence directs the whole; and "that it is impoſſible to conceal from him not only our actions, "but even our thoughts and emotions. We are next to learn

(*t*) Epict. Enchir. cap. 31. Ed. Upton. In the common editions it is cap. 38.

(*u*) It is with pleaſure I make uſe of Miſs Carter's excellent tranſlation of this and other paſſages of Epictetus.

"what

" what the gods are, for ſuch as they are found to be, ſuch muſt " he that would pleaſe and obey them, to the utmoſt of his " power, endeavour to be.—And in all his words and actions " behave as an imitator of God (*x*)." Here the words God and gods are uſed promiſcuouſly. It is undoubtedly a leſſon of great importance firſt to know that God is, and next what he is. But Epictetus expreſſes it thus, that we are firſt to learn that God is, or that there is a God, and next what the gods are. He urges it as a duty, that a man ſhould in all his words and actions behave as an imitator of God. The ſame thing he ſays with reſpect to the gods. " Such as the gods are, ſuch muſt he that would " pleaſe and obey them, to the utmoſt of his power, endeavour " to be." He ſpeaks of God's directing the whole by his Providence: and he had ſaid the ſame thing of the gods in ſtill ſtronger terms, in the paſſage above quoted from his Enchiridion. He here likewiſe obſerves, that nothing can be concealed from God: and he elſewhere makes the ſame ſuppoſition concerning the gods. " Are not the gods," ſays he, " every where at the ſame " diſtance? Do not they every where equally ſee what is do- " ing? (*y*)" Speaking of the deſires and averſions, he ſaith, " yield them up to Jupiter and the other gods: give thy ſelf up " to theſe: let theſe govern." The title and deſign of the 13th chapter of the firſt book of his Diſſertations is to ſhew, how every thing may be performed acceptably to the gods: and he there talks of the laws of the gods as what men are obliged to obey.

(*x*) Diſſert. Book i. chap. 14. ſ. 2.

(*y*) Book iv. chap. 4. at the end of that chapter.

When he mentions the celebrated ſaying of Socrates, in one place he has it thus, " if it pleaſes God, ſo let it be;" in another, " if " it pleaſes the gods, ſo let it be (*z*)." He ſuppoſes reaſon to be given to men by the gods (*a*). And ſpeaking of a man's having ſubdued his ill nature, his reviling and effeminacy, and having acquired good habits, he adds, " theſe things you have from your-ſelf and from the gods." Book iv. chap. 4. ſ. 6.

I ſhall next produce ſome paſſages from that excellent emperor and philoſopher Marcus Antoninus. " If there are no gods," ſaith he, " or if they have no regard to human affairs, why ſhould I " deſire to live in a world without gods, and without Provi-" dence? But gods undoubtedly there are, and they regard hu-" man affairs." What he here aſſerts as certain and undoubted is, that there are gods, and the providence he ſpeaks of is the providence of the gods (*b*). He gives it as an important advice, " In all things invoke the gods.—ἐφ' ἅπασι θεὸν ἐπικαλοῦ (*c*)." Upon which Gataker obſerves, that this is a pious advice, if the Heathen polytheiſm were ſeparated from it. " Pium monitum, " ſi ethniciſmi πολυθεία reſecetur." And the ſame obſervation may be made on many other paſſages in Antoninus's Meditations.

(*z*) Book i. chap. 29. ſ. 3. compared with the laſt chapter of the Enchiridion.

(*a*) Book iii. chap. 24. ſ. 1. This is agreeable to the ſtoical maxim, " Pru-" dentiam et mentem a diis ad homines perveniſſe." Cic. De nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 31.

(*b*) Antoninus's Meditations, book ii. ſ. 11.

(*c*) Book vi. ſ. 23. So Epictetus ſays ἴνχου τοῖς θεοῖς. Differt. lib. i. cap. 1. ſ. 2.

At

At the end of his firſt book, he expreſſeth his thankfulneſs to the gods, for the benefit of education, for good friends, tutors, parents, virtuous diſpoſitions, for having been preſerved from temptations, and placed in advantageous circumſtances for improvement. Theſe things he aſcribes to the goodneſs or beneficence of the gods, θεῶν εὐποια. And in the 40th ſection of his ninth book he directs men to pray to the gods, as having power to enable us to do our duty. And he there ſpeaks of the gods as giving us their aſſiſtance, even in things which they have put in our own power. The whole of what he there ſays is admirable, if applied to the one true God. And this, with other paſſages of the like kind, eſpecially his giving thanks in the paſſage juſt now mentioned for the advantages he had been favoured with, have been produced as a proof, that "this emperor plainly depended on God for "ſanctifying influences; and with the deepeſt humility and ſim-"plicity of heart acknowledges, that he owes to God's preventing "grace in his Providence about him, all thoſe virtuous diſpoſi-"tions in which he had any delight or complacency (*d*)." Thus it is that Chriſtian writers are apt to apply their own ideas of things, which they borrowed from the Holy Scriptures, to the writings of the Heathen philoſophers. But Antoninus in the paſſages here referred to makes no mention of the one Supreme God. The prayers for aſſiſtance, the praiſes and thankſgivings for benefits received, are rendered not to God, but to the gods. The gods are made the objects of truſt and dependence, and the people are led to place that confidence in them which is

(*d*) See the concluſion of the life of M. Antoninus prefixed to the Glaſgow tranſlation of his Meditations, p. 71, 72.

due to God alone. And this makes a very remarkable difference between the precepts and duties of religion as delivered by him, and thoſe which are preſcribed in the Holy Scriptures (*e*).

The

(*e*) It is not improper to obſerve on this occaſion, that it is no unuſual thing for Chriſtian writers in their quotations from Heathen authors to produce paſſages relating to the gods, as a proof that the Heathens acknowledged the government and attributes of the Deity in the Chriſtian ſenſe. An eminent Divine, whom I have had occaſion to mention before, has undertaken to ſhew, that by the mere light of their own unaſſiſted reaſon, without any help from Revelation and Tradition, the Heathens "had a knowledge and firm perſuaſion, that there exiſted one underived, "eternal, ſupreme, intelligent Being, Creator and Governor of the univerſe, "good, placable, a puniſher of vice, and rewarder of virtue, whom they thought "it their duty to worſhip, to pray to him, to praiſe him; and this Being they called "God *." He endeavours to prove the ſeveral parts of this propoſition diſtinctly by expreſs teſtimonies from the Heathen writers. Moſt of them are the ſame that are produced by the learned Dr. Cudworth, the moſt remarkable of which are conſidered in the courſe of this work. If it be allowed that ſome of them ſpeak of the one true God (the knowledge of whom was, as I have ſhewn, communicated from the beginning, though afterwards amazingly corrupted and depraved), yet ſtill it remains to be proved, that they derived this merely from the reſearches of their own reaſon, without any aſſiſtance from revelation or tradition. And this our learned author ſtrongly aſſerts, but has not proved. But, to paſs this by at preſent, what I would now obſerve is, that in proving the ſeveral parts of the above-mentioned propoſition, he promiſcuouſly produces paſſages which ſpeak of God and of the gods. Thus to prove that they held that God is omniſcient, he produces paſſages from Socrates and Plato, in which it is ſaid, that the gods ſee and know all things: as alſo that they have power to do whatever can be done. To ſhew that they believed that God governs the world by his Providence, he produces paſſages which aſcribe the government of the world to the gods. He obſerves, that "Cicero well argues, "that if we grant that God is an intelligent being, we muſt grant, that he directs "and governs all things." And yet Cicero in that paſſage, as he himſelf quotes it, ſpeaks not of God in the ſingular number, but of the gods. "Si concedimus in-"telligentes eſſe deos, concedimus etiam providentes, et rerum quidem maxima-"rum." De nat. Deor. lib. ii. When he comes to prove that part of his propoſition, that they believed the one God, the Creator and Governor of the world, to be good, placable, the puniſher of vice, and the rewarder of virtue, he produces

* Dr. Sykes's Principles and Connexion of Natural and Revealed Religion, chap. xiv. p. 362, et ſeq.

paſ-

The paſſages to be farther produced will ſet this in a ſtill clearer light. Antoninus obſerves, that "our natural conſtitution and "furniture is intended——to engage us in kindneſs to all men, "and in obedience to the gods (*f*)." And in another paſſage to the ſame purpoſe he repreſents it as our duty, while life continues, "to worſhip and praiſe or celebrate the gods, θεοὺς σέβειν "καὶ εὐφημεῖν, and to do good to men (*g*)." And again, "love "mankind," ſays he, "and be obedient to the gods (*b*)." To obey God, and do good to men, is certainly a noble ſummary of our duty. What a pity it is that ſuch fine precepts and ſentiments ſhould be weakened and debaſed by applying them to a multipli-

paſſages to ſhew, that "the Heathens believed that the gods are placable; but "that however placable the gods were deemed, yet they were looked upon as the "avengers of evil, and the rewarders of good actions." In like manner when he is to ſhew, that the Heathens maintained that God is to be worſhipped, he expreſſes it thus, that "the ſentiments they maintained concerning the gods muſt neceſſarily "lead men to pay them a proper worſhip, to prayer, praiſe, thankfulneſs, and ſub-"miſſion to their will; and that effect was produced; and theſe duties were ac-"knowledged to be due." And accordingly moſt of the paſſages he mentions relate to the worſhipping of the gods. And in general it may be obſerved, that when he propoſes to prove that the Heathens had a knowledge and perſuaſion of the attributes of the one true God, moſt of the teſtimonies he brings relate not to the one Supreme God, but to the gods; which ſhews, that though the idea of one God was not utterly extinguiſhed among the Pagans, yet it was generally confounded with a multiplicity of idol deities, to whom they applied the peculiar attributes and worſhip due to the one Supreme God: and that Jupiter, whom they vulgarly regarded as the ſupreme, and to whom ſome of the paſſages cited by the Doctor immediately refer, was really no more than the chief of their idol deities. And even among the philoſophers themſelves, God and the world was frequently confounded together, as making up one divinity.

(*f*) Anton. Med. book iii. ſ. 9.

(*g*) Ibid. book v. ſ. 33.

(*b*) Ibid. book vii. ſ. 31.

city

city of gods! For who are theſe gods whom we are bound to obey? Or, how far are we to obey them? This is to caſt the mind into perplexing uncertainties, and to encourage polytheiſm.

Antonine urges to meekneſs from the example of the gods. "The gods," ſaith he, "exerciſe meekneſs and patience towards "men, and even aid them in the purſuit of ſome things, as of "health, wealth, glory. So gracious are they! You may be ſo "too (*i*)." And he elſewhere ſuppoſes "the gods to bear with "a wicked world through a long eternity (*k*)."

He frequently repreſents the gods as the cauſes and orderers of all things. "Does any thing befal me?" ſays he. "I accept it, "as referring it to the gods, the fountain of all things, from "whom all things are ordered in a fixed ſeries (*l*)." Gataker, in his note upon this paſſage, produces ſeveral texts of Scripture to ſhew, that pious men aſcribe all things, whatſoever events befal them, to God. But there is this difference between the doctrine of the Scriptures on that head and that of Antonine, that what they teach us to refer to God as the Supreme Diſpoſer, he referreth to the gods. In the beginning of his tenth book, ſect 1. he gives excellent advices about our being ſatisfied with the ſtate we are in, whatſoever it is, and being pleaſed in every circumſtance: but

(*i*) Anton. Med. book ix. ſ. 11. et ſ. 27.

(*k*) Ibid. book vii. ſ. 70.

(*l*) Ibid. book viii. ſ. 23. In this and other paſſages here cited I make uſe of the Glaſgow tranſlation of Antoninus's Meditations, which appears to me to be a faithful and elegant one.

here alſo he ſpeaks in the polytheiſtic ſtrain. " Perſuade thy ſelf," ſaith he, " that thou haſt all things: all is right and well with " thee, and comes to thee from the gods. And all ſhall be " right and well for thee which they pleaſe to give, and which " they are about to give for the ſafety of the perfect animal." Here he ſpeaks of all things as coming to us from the gods; that all is right which they pleaſe to give or appoint: and repreſents them as ordering all things for the ſafety of the univerſe, which he there calls the moſt perfect animal (*m*), and deſcribes by characters proper to the Divinity, " the good, the juſt, the fair, the " parent of all things, the ſupporter, the container, the ſur- " rounder of all things."

He has ſeveral other paſſages to the ſame purpoſe. " As to " what happens," ſays he, " in the common courſe of nature, " the gods are not to be blamed: they never do wrong willingly " nor unwillingly (*n*)." And he gives it as the character of a juſt man, that " he followeth the gods with ſimplicity (*o*). To thoſe who aſk, " Where have you ſeen the gods? Or, whence are you " aſſured they exiſt, that you thus worſhip them?" He anſwers, " firſt they are viſible, even to the eye." This probably relates to the heavenly bodies, which were regarded as gods by the Stoics. He adds, " My own ſoul I cannot ſee, and yet I reve- " rence it: and thus as I experience continually the power of

(*m*) In like manner he calls the univerſe or the world an animal, book iv. ſ. 23; et 40.

(*n*) Book xii. ſ. 12.

(*o*) Ibid. ſ. 27.

" the

" the gods, I know both ſurely that they are, and worſhip " them (*p*)." This is well argued, if applied to the one true God, whoſe power, though he be inviſible to the bodily eye, extends through every part of the univerſe, and who is continually preſent to all his creatures. But the applying it to the gods, as if we were equally ſure of the exiſtence of a plurality of deities, and of their being every where preſent, ſpoils the force of the reaſoning, and the beauty of a noble ſentiment (*q*).

That

(*p*) Anton. Med. book xii. ſ. 28.

(*q*) A late ingenious author who has carried his apologies for the Heathens and their religion very far, taking notice that the emperor Marcus Antoninus frequently ſpeaks of gods in the plural, cautions his reader not to be ſurprized at it; for that " this phraſe was common with the Pagans and the Hebrews *." Where he intimates that it was as common among the Hebrews as among the Pagans to talk of gods in the plural. A ſtrange inſtance this of the power of prejudice, when engaged in the ſupport of a favourite hypotheſis. The contrary muſt, I think, be evident to any one that ever compared the Jewiſh and Pagan writings. As to the Pagans, a multiplicity of deities every where appears in their hiſtory, poetry, philoſophical and moral writings, and runs through the whole of their religion and laws. But the great and fundamental principle of the Jewiſh religion, expreſly preſcribed by their laws, and which appears in all their writings, hiſtorical, poetical, moral, and devotional, is, that there is one only God, the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, who alone is to be worſhipped and adored. And the many gods of the Heathens are ſpoken of with contempt and abhorrence. It is true, that one of the Hebrew names of God, Elohim, ſeems to be of a plural form, and is ſometimes attributed to the creatures: but beſides that the moſt peculiar name of God, Jehovah, is always ſingular, the word Elohim, when applied to the one true God, is almoſt conſtantly joined with a verb ſingular; and accordingly is in the New Teſtament always rendered by the word θεὸς, God: whereas, according to this gentleman's way of repreſenting it, we might expect to meet with the word θεοὶ, gods, as often in the New Teſtament as in the Pagan writings. The gods indeed are ſometimes mentioned there, when ſpeaking of the Pagan polytheiſm, but it is with a view to condemn it. Thus, St. Paul ſaith, " We know there is none other God but

* Cheval. Ramſay's Principles of Nat. and Rev. Rel. vol. ii. p. 440.

" one.

That celebrated philoſopher Plutarch, who alſo flouriſhed after the Goſpel was publiſhed to the world, frequently falls into the ſame manner of expreſſion. I ſhall only mention one paſſage. It is in his Conſolation to Appollonius. " We do not come into " life," ſays he, " as if we could preſcribe and make what laws " concerning it we pleaſe, but muſt obey the things which are " appointed by the gods which govern the univerſe, and muſt ſub- " mit to the decrees of fate and providence.—πειθόμενοι τοῖς διατεταγμένοις ὑπὸ τῶν τὰ ὅλα πρυτανευόντων θεῶν, καὶ τοῖς εἱμαρμένης καὶ προνοίας δόγμοις (r)."

Whoſoever impartially conſiders the paſſages which have been produced from ſome of the moſt eminent Heathen philoſophers, muſt, I think, be obliged to acknowledge, that their way of repreſenting things in their moſt ſerious diſcourſes, tended naturally to take off the attention of the people from the one Supreme God, and to lead them to a plurality of deities. Many have ſpoke with admiration of the piety which breathes in the ſtoical precepts. And any one that reads the account given of them by the learned Gataker in his præloquium or preliminary diſcourſe to his excellent Latin tranſlation and commentary on the Meditations of Antoninus, will be apt at firſt view to look upon it as a ſummary of the principal duties towards God preſcribed in the Holy Scriptures.

" one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth " (as there be gods many and lords many) " where he ſeems evidently to refer to the Pagan polytheiſm; " but to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are " all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things, " and we by him." 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6.

(r) Plut. Oper. tom. ii. p. 111. Edit. Francof. 1620.

But there is this eſſential difference between them; that the duties which the Scriptures require us to exerciſe towards the one true God, they direct to be paid to the gods, and thereby impair and corrupt the nobleſt ſentiments, and ſpread confuſion through that which they themſelves acknowledge to be the moſt important part of our duty. And indeed they ſeem to have had no ſmall confuſion in their ideas on this ſubject. Some might be apt to think, that by the gods they underſtood the one God under different names and manifeſtations: which was a notion ſometimes made uſe of to put a plauſible colour on the Pagan polytheiſm. But any one that carefully conſiders the paſſages which have been mentioned will find that in moſt of them this pretence cannot be admitted, and that the gods are plainly ſpoken of as diſtinct really exiſtent divine beings. In a note of the Glaſgow tranſlation on that paſſage of Antoninus, where he ſays, "the ſun is formed "for a certain office, and ſo are the other gods (*s*)," it is obſerved, that "the better ſects of the Heathen philoſophers, be-"ſides the one Supreme original Deity, conceived great numbers "of ſuperior natures, inveſted with great powers of government, "in certain parts of the univerſe——and that the Heathens called "thoſe ſuperior beings gods, and the Chriſtians called them an-"gels (*t*)." But nothing is plainer, than that the philoſophers aſcribe things to the gods, which no way agree to the idea the Scripture teaches us to form of angels, and which properly belong to the one true God. In ſeveral of the paſſages above-mentioned,

(*s*) Anton. Medit. book viii. ſ. 19.

(*t*) Glaſgow tranſlation of Antoninus, p. 299.

the

the gods are repreſented as the cauſes and governors of the univerſe, ordering and directing all things, extending their power and providence to every thing, the ſmalleſt as well as the greateſt, as every where preſent and knowing all things, not only all men's actions, but even their moſt ſecret thoughts, as the fountain of all good things, and the diſpoſers of all events, to whom we owe the moſt abſolute ſubjection, reſignation, and obedience, in whoſe appointments we muſt always acquieſce, being ſatisfied that they never can do wrong, and that they adminiſter all things with the moſt perfect underſtanding, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs: that it is our duty to worſhip and adore them; that to them we muſt offer up our prayers, and moſt devoutly and thankfully aſcribe the praiſe of every good thing which befalleth us; that we muſt refer all things to them and to their will, and in them muſt place our confidence and truſt.

The cenſures therefore which the learned Dr. Cudworth paſſeth upon the poets, may be juſtly applied to the moſt celebrated philoſophers. " That they made the theology of the Pagans look " ariſtocratically——by their ſpeaking ſo much of the gods in ge- " neral, and without diſtinction, and attributing the government " of the whole to them in common, as if it were managed and " carried on by a common council and republic of gods (*u*),

(*u*) Balbus, in Cicero's ſecond book of the Nature of the Gods, aſſerts, that " the world is governed by the council of the gods.—Deorum conſilio mundum " adminiſtrari." Cap. 29. p. 177. Edit. Davis, 2da. To the ſame purpoſe he repreſents the gods as joined together by a kind of civil conſociation, and governing the world as a common city or republic. " Inter ſe quaſi civili conciliatione et " ſocietate conjunctos, unum mundum ut communem rempublicam atque urbem " aliquam regentes." Ibid. cap. 31. p. 179.

" wherein all things were determined by a majority of voices, " and as if their Jupiter or Supreme God were no more among " them than a ſpeaker of the houſe of lords or commons, or the " chairman of a committee (*x*)." The ſame learned author acknowledges concerning the Stoics, that " they often derogate from " the honour of the Supreme Deity, by attributing ſuch things to " the gods in common as the donors of them, which plainly be- " long to the Supreme God (*y*)."

Thus the philoſophers, by talking of God and the gods promiſcuouſly, contributed to confound the notions of the people, and countenanced and confirmed them in their polytheiſm, and in their veneration for the popular deities.

(*x*) Cudworth's Intel. Syſtem, p. 357.

(*y*) Ibid. p. 427.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Some farther conſiderations to ſhew how little was to be expected from the philoſophers for recovering the Pagans from their polytheiſm and idolatry. They referred the people for inſtruction in divine matters to the oracles, which were managed by the prieſts. This ſhewn particularly concerning Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics. It was an univerſal maxim among them, That it was the duty of every wiſe and good man to conform to the religion of his country. And not only did they worſhip the gods of their reſpective countries, according to the eſtabliſhed rites, and exhort others to do ſo, but when they themſelves took upon them the character of legiſlators, and drew up plans of laws and of the beſt forms of government, not the worſhip of the one true God, but polytheiſm, was the religion they propoſed to eſtabliſh.

IT is a farther inſtance of the philoſophers countenancing the popular idolatries and ſuperſtitions, that, except the Epicureans and others who denied a providence, they generally encouraged divination and the oracles. Socrates himſelf was very remarkable this way. Xenophon mentions it as a proof of his piety, that he openly uſed divination; and ſpeaking of thoſe who thought that the gods ſignified things to men by birds, omens, preſages, and ſacrifices, he ſays, that Socrates thought ſo too (*a*).

(*a*) Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. cap. 1. ſ. 2, 3.

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He frequently adviſed men to follow the direction of the oracles, eſpecially in matters of religion (*b*). And above all he ſhewed a great veneration for the Delphian oracle. Xenophon obſerves, that when any perſons enquired of the Pythian oracle what they ſhould do with reſpect to ſacrifices, and the religion of their anceſtors, or any thing of that nature, the oracle was wont to anſwer them, that they would act piouſly, if they performed theſe things according to the laws of their reſpective cities; and he informs us, that Socrates, in matters relating to the gods, τὰ πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, both ſpoke and acted conformably to that direction of the oracle: that he both did this himſelf, and exhorted others to do ſo: and looked upon thoſe who acted otherwiſe as vain and ſuperſtitious perſons, περιέργους, perſons impertinently buſy, or that meddled with things which did not belong to them. A remarkable inſtance of this we have in his excellent converſation with Euthydemus before referred to. When this young man expreſſed his concern, that he knew not how to make worthy returns to the gods for the many benefits received from them, Socrates bids him not be diſcouraged at this: "For," ſays he, "thou ſeeſt "the god at Delphi, when any one aſks him, how he may do "that which is acceptable to the gods, anſwers, By worſhipping

(*b*) Socrates adviſed him that would know things above the reach of human wiſdom to apply himſelf to divination. For that that man would never be deſtitute of the counſel and direction of the gods, who ſhould know and obſerve by what way they ſignified things to men. Xen. Memorab. lib. iv. cap. 7. ſ. 10. This ſhews the ſenſe he had of the great need men ſtood in of a direction from above in divine matters, which alſo appears from ſeveral other paſſages. But it is a mortifying thing to think, that a perſon of his great underſtanding ſhould ſend men for knowing the Divine Will, to what was then called divination, and to the oracles of the gods.

" them according to the law of the city—νόμῳ πόλεως (*c*)." Agreeable to this is the deſcription he gives of piety, and of a pious man. After having obſerved, that piety is a moſt excellent and beautiful thing, he deſcribes the pious man to be one that that honoureth the gods: but that it is not lawful for any man to worſhip the gods as he himſelf thinks fit. There are laws according to which it is to be done: and he who obſerves thoſe laws may know how the gods ought to be honoured. He concludes therefore, that he who honoureth the gods according to the laws, honoureth them as he ought: and he who honoureth the gods as he ought, is a truly pious man. This is the ſubſtance of Socrates's diſcourſe on this head as recorded by Xenophon (*d*). Thus we ſee, it was in Socrates's opinion eſſential to true piety to worſhip the gods, and to worſhip them in the manner and according to the rites eſtabliſhed by the laws. And among the Attic laws this was one: " Let it be a law among the Athenians for ever ſacred " and inviolable, always to render due homage in public towards " the gods, and native heroes, according to the uſual cuſtom of " the country, and with all poſſible ſincerity to offer in private " firſt fruits with anniverſary cakes (*e*)." And it was before ſhewn, that every citizen of Athens was obliged to take a ſolemn oath to conform to the religion of his country.

It is a great miſtake to ſuppoſe, as ſome have done, that Socrates endeavoured to draw men off from the public religion, or from

(*c*) Xen. Memorab. lib. iv. cap. 3. ſ. 16.

(*d*) Ibid. cap. 6. ſ. 2, 3, 4.

(*e*) Potter's Greek Antiq. vol. i. p. 136.

the

the worſhip of the popular deities. Dacier, in his introduction to Socrates's apology, ſays, that "Socrates attacked the ſuperſtition of "the Athenians, and the plurality of their gods, by expoſing "the ridiculouſneſs of the fables with which their theology was "filled, and by that means endeavoured to bring them to the "knowledge of the one true God." And it is true, that Socrates diſapproved the literal ſenſe of ſome of the poetical fables, which raiſed a prejudice againſt him in the minds of the Athenians; yet he ſuppoſed thoſe fables to contain a hidden and myſterious meaning (*f*), and that the poets, as well as the diviners and deliverers of oracles, were inſpired by a divine afflatus. This appears from the paſſages produced above, chap. vi. to which I refer the reader. He never diſſuaded the people from worſhipping the gods appointed by the laws. The accuſation brought againſt him by Anytus and Melitus was, that he did not believe thoſe to be gods which the city believed, and that he introduced other new gods. But againſt this charge Xenophon zealouſly vindicates him, by obſerving, that he openly ſacrificed to the gods, frequently at home, and often at the public altars of the city (*g*). And Socrates himſelf, in his apology to his judges, declares, that he wonders how Melitus came to know that he did not eſteem them to be gods whom the city regarded as ſuch, ſince many had ſeen him ſacrificing on the common feſtivals, and at the public altars; and Melitus himſelf might have ſeen him if he had pleaſed (*h*). He

(*f*) See the learned Mr. Des Veaux's life of Julian, vol. ii. p. 232.

(*g*) Xen. Memor. lib. i. cap. i. ſ. 1. 3.

(*h*) Ibid. p. 369. Edit. Sympſon, 2da.

appeals to Apollo's oracle in his own defence, of whom he ſpeaks with great veneration. And in his priſon he compoſed a hymn to Apollo, which he himſelf mentions in his laſt diſcourſe to his friends on the day of his death (*i*).

What hath been obſerved concerning Socrates, holds equally with reſpect to Plato. In the fourth book of his Republic he refers to Apollo at Delphi, as having made the moſt excellent conſtitutions in religious matters: and inſtances in thoſe relating to temples, ſacrifices, and the other rites obſerved in the worſhip of the gods, dæmons, and heroes,—and whatſoever things are neceſſary to propitiate them. And then adds, "theſe things we do "not know, and in ordering or adminiſtering the city, we will, "if we be wiſe, obey no other, nor uſe any other guide or in-"ſtructor than the patron god, or the god of our country." By which he means the Delphian Apollo, whom he had mentioned juſt before. "ὑθενὶ ἄλλῳ πειθόμεθα ἐαν νῦν ἔχομεν ὑδὲ χρησόμεθα "ἐξηγητῆ ἀλλῳ ἢ τῳ πατρίῳ [θεῷ] (*k*)." And in his ſixth book of Laws he ſaith, that "the laws concerning divine things were "to be ſought for from Delphi, and that of theſe the prieſts were "to be the interpreters (*l*)." In his tenth book of Laws he blames thoſe men as putting impious notions into the heads of young perſons, who taught them that they ought not to look upon thoſe to be gods, whom the law required them to regard as ſuch. "ὡς ὐκ ὄντων θεῶν ὁίων ὁ νομος προσ-άτ[ει." And he repre-

(*i*) Plato's Phædo Oper. p. 376. H. Edit. Fic. Lugd. 1590.

(*k*) Plato Oper. p. 448. B, C.

(*l*) Ibid. p. 616. G.

ſents it as the duty and office of a legiſlator to puniſh thoſe who do not believe the gods to be ſuch as the law declares them to be (*m*). He there all along treats thoſe perſons as atheiſts, who did not acknowledge the gods appointed by law, and takes upon himſelf the defence of them. In his Epinomis, he ſuppoſes many of the gods and dæmons to have been made known by dreams, prophecy, divination, voices heard by perſons in health or in ſickneſs, or even at the hour of their departure; and that theſe things have given riſe to the inſtitution of many religious rites obſerved both privately and publicly; and he would not have any of the rites founded upon them to be neglected or altered. He adds, that a legiſlator who hath the leaſt ſhare of underſtanding will not make the moſt minute alteration in any of theſe things, or endeavour to turn his city to a leſs certain way of worſhip; and that he will not attempt to innovate in any thing relating to the ſacrifices preſcribed by the laws of the country (*n*). This may help us to judge of the truth of Dacier's aſſertion in his diſcourſe on Plato, and which he repeats in his life, that "Plato "endeavours to re-eſtabliſh natural religion, by oppoſing Paganiſm which was the corruption of it; and that in order to cure "men of ſuperſtition and idolatry, which then reigned ſo much "in the world, Plato forgets nothing which might induce them "to render God a rational worſhip (*o*)."

All

(*m*) Plato Oper. p. 666.

(*n*) Ibid. p. 702. E.

(*o*) Ficinus, who was both a great admirer of that philoſopher and throughly verſed in his writings, ſays, that "Plato, in imitation of the more antient theologers and all the Platoniſts, received the hiſtory of oracles as true, "and

All the other philoſophers without exception concurred in the ſame ſentiments, that every nation ſhould worſhip the gods according to the eſtabliſhed laws and cuſtoms, to which alſo every private perſon ought in his own practice to conform. The firſt precept in the golden verſes of Pythagoras, which though not compoſed by himſelf, are allowed to contain a ſummary of the Pythagoric doctrine, is this: " That men ſhould in the firſt place " worſhip the immortal gods, as they are appointed by the " law.—

" Ἀθανάτους μὲν πρῶτα θεοὺς νόμῳ ὡς διάκειται
" Τίμα."

Where it may be obſerved, that there is not the leaſt mention made of worſhipping the one Supreme God. Cicero expreſſeth the ſenſe of all the Pagan philoſophers as well as legiſlators, when he ſaith, " Majorum inſtituta tueri ſacris cæremoniiſque retinendis

" and endeavoured to ſupport it by arguments: that both in his Phædrus and " Timæus he ſhews great faith in them. In his Phædrus he counts all human " wiſdom to be as nothing in compariſon of that which is obtained from oracles " and divine madneſs. And in his Timæus he ſays, that with relation to divine " matters a philoſopher ought not to affirm any thing but in as far as it is agree- " able to and confirmed by the divine oracles." Ficinus adds, that there are many things in Plato of this kind. " Profectò et ipſe Plato antiquiores theologos imita- " tus, et Platonici omnes, oraculorum hiſtoriam ubique tanquàm veram accipiunt, " rationibuſque confirmant. Mitto quantam his in Phædro adhibeat fidem: quan- " tam et in Timæo: in Phædro quidèm humanam ſapientiam præ illâ quæ ab ora- " culis furoribuſque divinis habetur nihili pendens: in Timæo autèm diceus eatenùs " a philoſopho de rebus divinis affirmandum eſſe quatenùs divinis oraculis confirme- " tur. Mitto quàm plurima apud Platonem ſimilia." Ficin. Argument. in apologiam Socratis. Plat. Oper. p. 797. E, F. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

"ſapientis eſt (*p*)." That it is the part or duty of a wiſe man to maintain the inſtitutions of our anceſtors, and to retain the ſacred rites and ceremonies. Cotta in Cicero's third book De naturâ Deorum, though he takes great liberties in expoſing ſome of the fables concerning the gods, yet ſpeaking of the opinions which they had received from their anceſtors, relating to the immortal gods and their religious rites and ceremonies, declares that he always had defended them, and always would; and that no man's diſcourſe, whether learned or unlearned, ſhould ever move him to forſake the opinion derived from their anceſtors concerning the worſhip of the gods. "Ego verò eas ſemper defendam, "ſemperque defendi: nec me ex ea opinione quam a majoribus "accepi, de cultu deorum immortalium, ullius unquam oratio, "aut docti aut indocti, movebit (*q*)." The excellent Epictetus repreſents it as a duty incumbent upon every one to offer up libations and ſacrifices and firſt fruits according to the cuſtoms or rites of his country, κατὰ τὰ πάτρια (*r*). Plutarch has ſeveral paſſages to the ſame purpoſe; and he himſelf was initiated in the ſacred rites at Delphi, and was a prieſt of Apollo. And to add no more, that great and good emperor and philoſopher Marcus Antoninus was remarkably ſtrict in the worſhip of the gods, and in the obſervation of the ſacred ceremonies. In a time of public calamity when the plague raged in Italy, and the war broke out with the Quadi and Marcomanni, he endeavoured to appeaſe the gods by a great variety of ſacrifices; and was no leſs liberal in his

(*p*) De Divinat. lib. ii. cap. 72. p. 295. Edit. Davies.

(*q*) De nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 2. p. 266.

(*r*) Epict. Enchir. cap. 31. Edit. Upton.

thankſ-

thankſgivings to them, when he met with victory and ſucceſs. This occaſioned that jeſt upon him, which Ammianus Marcellinus informs us was handed down to his time. "The white "oxen to Marcus Cæſar, if thou conquereſt we periſh (*s*)."

Not only did the philoſophers urge the people to conform to the religion already eſtabliſhed by the laws of their reſpective countries, but when they took upon them the character of legiſlators, and gave plans of ſuch laws and conſtitutions, as appeared to them moſt agreeable to reaſon, and to be moſt for the benefit of mankind, with regard to religion as well as civil matters, they did not preſcribe to the people the worſhip of the one true God, the Creator of the univerſe, or lay this as the baſis of their religious conſtitutions, as the lawgiver of the Hebrews did; but the whole ſcheme of the laws and religion they propoſed turned upon a multiplicity of deities. The moſt celebrated of the philoſophical ſpeculative legiſlators was Plato. But whatever notions he himſelf had of the Supreme Being, the firſt principle and cauſe of all things, he did not propoſe him to the people as the object of their public worſhip, and of the popular adoration and devotions, becauſe what he is, and how he is to be worſhipped, is not to be deſcribed or declared. He begins his eighth book of Laws with obſerving, that as to what relates to religion, and to the ſolemn feſtivals, what ſacrifices it would be beſt and propereſt for the city to offer, and to what gods they ſhould be offered, this ought to be regulated with the advice of the Delphian oracle. He himſelf there propoſes twelve ſacred feſtivals to be ſolemnized, one in

(*s*) Ammian. Marcell. lib. 25. p. 427. Paris 1681.

each

each month, to the twelve deities from whom the ſeveral tribes ſhould be denominated. He ſpeaks alſo of the ſolemnities of the celeſtial and terreſtrial gods. He frequently aſſerts the divinity of the ſtars. At the latter end of his ſeventh book of Laws, he calls the ſun and moon the great gods; and in his Epinomis he ſays, "one of "theſe two things muſt be allowed: either we muſt ſay, and "that moſt rightly, that the ſtars are gods, or elſe that they are "the images, or as it were the ſtatues of the gods, formed and "faſhioned by the gods themſelves (*t*)." And ſoon after he calls them "the firſt and greateſt viſible gods, who are moſt to be "honoured, and who with a moſt acute ſight behold all things." And he pronounces, that "thoſe ought to be accounted very bad "men, who do not openly declare to the people thoſe gods "which are manifeſt to our eyes" [by which he underſtands the ſtars, whom a little before he had called the greateſt viſible gods] "or who ſuffer them to be neglected, and left without ſacrifices, "and the honours which are due to them." And therefore he directs that ſacrifices ſhould be offered, and ſolemn days celebrated to their honour (*u*).

Steuchus Eugubinus, who was very well acquainted with Plato's philoſophy, and had a high eſteem for it, obſerves, that Plato

(*t*) It is to be obſerved that he ſtoes not call them the images of God, as ſome have repreſented his ſenſe, but the images of the gods, i. e. of the gods that inhabit or animate them, and who fabricated them for themſelves. And I think Ficinus's obſervation a juſt one, that Plato calls the ſouls of the ſtars gods, and their bodies the images of the gods. "Appellat animas ſtellarum deos, eorum verò corpora "deorum ſimulacra." Argum. in Epin. See Plat. Oper. Ficin. p. 701. H. et p. 845. Lugd. 1590.

(*u*) Ibid. p. 702. F.

hath ſaid nothing about the Supreme Deity in his book of Laws, as being not to be known or deſcribed either as to name or nature, nor hath he ſet down any thing about his worſhip: that he thought it not lawful to publiſh to the vulgar the Parent of the univerſe.——For not underſtanding the things that are ſaid of him, they would be apt to deride them, as being things remote from popular cuſtom, and from their groſs conceptions: that therefore treating of laws which ought to be publiſhed to the people, he ſpeaks nothing of this great unſearchable Divinity, and propoſeth only the worſhip of heaven to the people, to whom he muſt ſpeak only of that which they eſteemed certain religion (*x*). It is probable that when Eugubinus mentions Plato as propoſing the worſhip of heaven to the people, he not only refers to his frequently recommending the worſhip of the heavenly bodies, but has in view that paſſage in his Epinomis, where he mentions heaven as the Supreme God, the Author of all good things, whom men as well as all the other gods ſhould worſhip and adore. A man may call it, ſays he, either the world, or Olympus, or heaven, provided he conſiders its various operations, that it makes the ſtars revolve in their ſeveral courſes, and cauſes the differences of times and ſeaſons, and provides proper aliment for all animals (*y*). Ficinus, than whom no man was better acquainted with the works of Plato, and who carried his admiration of him to a degree of enthuſiaſm, puts the queſtion, Why Plato openly aſſerts only the celeſtial gods, viz. the heavenly bodies? To which he anſwers,

(*x*) Steuch. Eugub. de perenni Philoſophia, lib. v. cap. 3.

(*y*) Plat. Oper. ubi ſupra, p. 699.

That

That it was "becauſe the contemplation of the higher deities is "altogether foreign to the matter of laws; and by mentioning "the celeſtial gods, which are moved and employed in their "ſeveral proper offices, he ſufficiently intimates, that a higher "god is to be fought after, who being himſelf unmoved moves "them all, and as their common leader aſſigns each of them "their reſpective functions.—Quoniam ſuperiorum contemplatio "eſt a legum materiâ admodùm aliena, et per cœleſtes deos qui "moventur, et propriis mancipantur officiis, ſatis admonet ſupe-"riorem eſſe quærendum, qui et immotus ipſe moveat omnia et "communis dux propria ſingulis aſſignat officia (*z*)." But ſince Plato meddles with religion in his laws, and ſets himſelf to prove the exiſtence and providence of the gods againſt the atheiſts; and ſince he thought fit to give directions to the people as to the gods they were to worſhip; he ought certainly to have clearly directed them to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one ſupreme God, and to have inſiſted principally upon this as of the higheſt importance. And his taking ſo little notice of this, and yet ſo ſtongly recommending the worſhip of other deities, eſpecially of the heavenly bodies, and at the ſame time declaring againſt any alteration of the laws and cuſtoms relating to religion, and the worſhip of the gods, ſhews that little was to be hoped for from him for reforming the popular ſuperſtition and idolatry. He rather eſtabliſhed and confirmed it (*a*).

In

(*z*) See Ficinus's arguments on Plato's tenth book of Laws. Plat. Oper. p. 841. F.

(*a*) Origen ſeems to have had Plato particularly in view when he finds fault with thoſe who, notwithſtanding their ſublime ſpeculations concerning the ineffable firſt good,

In like manner Cicero in his excellent treatiſe of laws, which contains, according to Dr. Middleton (*b*), a juſt account of his ſentiments, and where he appears in the character both of a philoſopher and lawgiver, gives no law relating to the worſhip of the one Supreme God, but expreſly preſcribes the worſhip of a plurality of deities; both of thoſe who were always accounted celeſtial; by which he refers to the gods who were called Dii conſentes et ſelecti, and Dii majorum gentium; and of thoſe whoſe merits had placed them in heaven; ſuch as Hercules, Liber, Æſculapius, Caſtor and Pollux, and Quirinus: as alſo of the houſhold gods: and binds it as a duty upon the people in theſe things to follow the religion of their anceſtors (*c*).

It ſufficiently appeareth from the obſervations which have been made, how little was to be expected from the greateſt and beſt philoſophers for leading the people into the right knowledge and worſhip of the one true Supreme God, and recovering them from the idolatry and polytheiſm in which they were involved.

good, joined in the common idolatry——and he applies to them that of St. Paul, Rom. i. 18. that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations or reaſonings." Cont. Celſ. lib. 6. p. 276, 277. Edit. Spenſer. And elſewhere he obſerves concerning thoſe who were puffed up with the knowledge they had learned from philoſophy, that they frequented the temples and ſtatues of the gods, and the myſteries, no leſs than the moſt illiterate of the vulgar, and led others to do ſo: and that they were not aſhamed to addreſs themſelves to inanimate things, as gods or the images of the gods: in which the moſt ſimple Chriſtian acted better than they. Ibid. lib. vii. p. 362.

(*b*) Middleton's Life of Cicero, vol. ii. p. 623. Edit. Dublin.

(*c*) Cic. De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8. p. 100. Edit. Davis, 2da.

What has been obſerved relates principally to the philoſophers of Greece and Rome. But it may not be improper here to add ſomething concerning the famous Chineſe philoſopher Confucius. It appears from the accounts given us of his life and writings by the learned authors of Confucius Sinarum Philoſophus, ſive Scientia Sinenſis latinè expoſita, and who ſeem to be very much prejudiced in his favour, that he was a great upholder of the antient ſuperſtitions, and would not ſuffer the leaſt deviation from them. He blames thoſe who did not worſhip according to the accuſtomed rites, but were ambitious to ſacrifice to a higher kind of ſpirits than their condition allowed. For, according to the Chineſe laws, none but the emperor was to offer ſacrifices with ſolemn rites to heaven, and to the earth. The tributary kings and princes, who were next in dignity to the emperor, were allowed to ſacrifice to the mountains and rivers, or to their ſpirits: the inferior governors to inferior things; and ſo on: every one was to offer ſacrifices according to the rank of the offerer, and of the ſpirits to which he ſacrificed. Confucius was for having this order ſtrictly obſerved (*d*): from whence it is evident, that he ſeems to have conſidered religion chiefly in a political view. By heaven the followers of Confucius of the learned ſect generally underſtand the viſible material heaven, and by the ſpirit of heaven its phyſical virtue and efficacy void of intelligence. Thus Confucius's nephew Cu Su ſeems to have underſtood it, as appears from a paſſage in the book Chùm Yùm (*e*). But let us ſuppoſe, that Confucius

(*d*) Scient. Sin. lib. iii. part 1. p. 21. et part 2. p. 3, 4.

(*e*) Ibid. lib. ii. p. 87.

him-

himſelf by heaven and the ſpirit of heaven underſtood the one Supreme God, the ſacrificing to him ſeems not to be a religion he deſigned for the people, but to be reſerved for the emperor himſelf, and forbidden to inferior perſons; who were only allowed to worſhip thoſe things of nature, and the ſpirits of them, which were ſuppoſed to be of inferior dignity. And by the ſpirits of the things, according to the Chineſe philoſophy, are to be underſtood their operative virtues, which are only the fineſt parts of the things themſelves. This is plainly proved by F. Longobardi, whom I have before cited. And the learned Jeſuits who publiſhed the Scientia Sinenſis own, that Confucius ſuppoſes the ſpirits to be intimately united to the things of nature, and that they cannot be ſeparated from them (*f*).

(*f*) Scient. Sin. lib. ii. p. 51.

CHAP. XVI.

Farther proofs of the philoſophers countenancing and encouraging the popular idolatry and polytheiſm. They employed their learning and abilities to defend and juſtify it. The worſhip of inferior deities was recommended by them under pretence that it tended to the honour of the ſupreme. Some of the moſt eminent of them endeavoured to colour over the abſurdeſt part of the Pagan poetic theology by allegorizing the moſt indecent fables. They even apologized for the Egyptian animal worſhip, which the generality of the vulgar Pagans in other nations ridiculed. Their plea for idolatry and image-worſhip as neceſſary to keep the people from falling into irreligion and atheiſm. Some of the moſt refined philoſophers were againſt any external worſhip of the ſupreme God.

SO far were the philoſophers from taking proper methods to recover the people from the common idolatry and polytheiſm, that they employed their learning and abilities to uphold the popular idolatry, and to find out the moſt plauſible colours for juſtifying and recommending it.

It is an obſervation which has been often made, that after Chriſtianity appeared to bleſs the world with its ſalutary light, the philoſophers were the principal ſupporters of declining Paganiſm. They put on an appearance of extraordinary piety, and profeſſed to look upon the things of nature with religious eyes, ſo as to be-

hold

hold God in them. They alledged that the whole world is to be regarded as a ſacred thing, as being nothing but God himſelf diſplayed in his works: that mens devotions therefore were not to be huddled up in one general acknowledgment of a ſupreme inviſible Being, the Maker and Governor of this vaſt univerſe, but that all the ſeveral powers, and virtues, and manifeſtations of the Deity in the world, conſidered ſingly and apart by themſelves, ſhould be called by ſeveral diſtinct names, and made ſo many diſtinct objects of their veneration: and therefore they ſpoke of the things of nature, and parts of the world, as ſo many diſtinct gods and goddeſſes. Thus it is that the very learned Dr. Cudworth, who was far from being prejudiced againſt them, repreſents their ſentiments (*g*). By ſuch pretences as theſe they endeavoured to put a fair gloſs upon the moſt ſtupid idolatry, even when, through the prevailing light of the Goſpel, many of the vulgar came to be ſenſible of the abſurdity of it (*b*).

None of the Pagan philoſophers were thought to have ſublimer notions of the Divinity, than the Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, thoſe of them eſpecially who lived after the Chriſtian revelation was publiſhed to the world, yet none were more ſtrenuous aſſerters of the worſhip of inferior deities. And indeed the whole ſcheme and ſyſtem of that philoſophy tended to ſupport and encourage it. They held that the Supreme Being is ſo far above us, as not to be

(*g*) Intel. Syſt. p. 228.

(*b*) Julian Orat. iv. cited by Cudworth. Intel. Syſt. p. 514. See alſo the epiſtle of Maximus Madaurenſis, a noted Pagan philoſopher, to St. Auſtin. Apud Auguſtin. Opera, tom. II. epiſt. 16.

approached even in thought: and that the higheſt claſs of gods next to the Supreme are ſo far removed from us, that there is no immediate communication between them and mankind: but that there are vaſt numbers of intermediate powers dwelling in the airy regions between the higheſt æther and our earth, by whom our deſires and prayers are carried up to the gods, and to whom the management of things here below is committed; and that to them religious worſhip is to be paid. It is evident that theſe principles of Plato's ſchool were favourable to the Pagan polytheiſm (*i*). They even repreſented the worſhipping inferior deities as an honour done to the Supreme; and found fault with thoſe who were for paying their adorations to the one Supreme God, and to him only. "The great king of the univerſe," ſays that eminent philoſopher Plotinus, "ſhews his greatneſs chiefly by the multitude of gods. "For this is not the part of thoſe who know the power of God "to contract the Divinity into one, τὸ συσ-ειλαι εἰς ἕν, but to ex-"pand or diſplay it as he himſelf hath expanded it; who re-"maining, what he is, one, maketh many, all of whom depend "upon him, and are by him, and from him (*k*)." And Onatus the Pythagorean, in a paſſage preſerved by Stobæus, aſſerts, that "there is not one only God, but one the greateſt and higheſt "God: and that there are many other gods, differing in power, "but he reigneth over them all, as ſurpaſſing them all in power, "reaſon, and virtue." He adds, that "thoſe who maintain

(*i*) The Indian Bramins in Malabar have the ſame notions, which they make uſe of to juſtify the worſhip paid by them to a vaſt number of inferior deities. See Narrative of the Daniſh Miſſionaries, part. 2d. p. 7. et ſeq.

(*k*) Ennead. II. lib. ix. cap. 9.

"that

" that there is only one God, are much miſtaken: for they do not " conſider that the greateſt dignity of the divine ſuper-eminence " conſiſts in ruling and governing thoſe who are like him, and " in his being more excellent than others, and ſuperior to " them (*l*)." Thus ingenious have men been to deviſe plauſible pretences for paying divine honours to the creatures. But how much nobler is the ſcripture doctrine! which teacheth us, that there are numberleſs myriads of holy and mighty angels, ſubject to the Supreme, but that we are not to adore them, but to join with them in adoring their and our ſupreme univerſal Lord. Maximus Tyrius, in the concluſion of his firſt Diſſertation, expreſſeth himſelf thus, " if you are too weak to contemplate the " Father and maker of all things, it is ſufficient for you at preſent to behold the works, and to worſhip his progeny [τὰ ἔκγονα, the things which proceed from him] which are many " and of various kinds; not merely as many as the Bœotian " poet mentions; for there are not only thirty thouſand gods, " the ſons and friends of God, but their number is not to be " comprehended: and ſuch in the heaven are the ſtars, in the " æther dæmons (*m*)." Thus were the objects of worſhip multiplied by the philoſophers themſelves to an amazing degree (*n*): which

(*l*) Apud Stob. Eclog. Phyſic. lib. i. cap. 3. p. 4. edit. Plant. Onatus ſeems to intimate that there were ſome in his time who held that there is only one God: where he either refers to the Jews, or to ſome among the Gentiles who joined with them in this. But whoever they were, he plainly charges it as an error; and in this he ſpeaks the ſenſe of the moſt eminent philoſophers.

(*m*) Max. Tyr. Diſſert. 1. p. 18. Edit. Oxon. 1677.

(*n*) The philoſophers not only joined with the popular Pagans in deifying and worſhipping ſenſible objects, the things of this viſible world, but the moſt refined of them,

which, at the ſame time, under pretence of the moſt exalted notions of the Supreme Being, they declined ſpeaking of him or of the worſhip due to him to the people. They alleged that the vulgar were unable to form any conception of an inviſible Deity, and looked upon that to be nothing which they could not ſee or perceive by their ſenſes; that therefore the worſhipping the things of nature and the inferior deities, was the only way to keep the people from running into atheiſm. On the ſame foundation they pleaded for and recommended the worſhip of images. Thus Maximus Tyrius, in a diſſertation on this very ſubject, ſays, that "the "divine nature ſtands not in need of images or ſtatues; but that "the nature and condition of man being very weak, and as "far diſtant from the Divinity as heaven is from the earth, "framed theſe ſigns for itſelf, and attributed to them the names "and titles of the gods;" and he thinks the legiſlators acted wiſely in contriving images for the people (*o*). He eſpecially approves the making images of the gods in human forms; but he alſo juſtifies the worſhipping rivers, mountains, and other parts of nature, as the ſigns and repreſentations of the Divinity.

them, the Platoniſts, added a vaſt number of deities of their own imagining, and which belonged to the world of ideas, the intelligible and archetypal world, of which this ſenſible world is only the ſhadow and image, as Plotinus calls it *. It was their humour to deify the abſtract notions of their own minds, and to make them divine powers, intelligences, and ſubſtantial eſſences. The latter Platoniſts eſpecially, who affected an extraordinary ſublimity and refinement, carried this to a ſtrange degree of extravagance. Any man will be convinced of this that conſiders the account which Proclus gives of theſe myſtic and metaphyſical deities, in the third and following books of his Theologia Platonica.

(*o*) Max. Tyr. diſſert. 38. p. 452. Edit. Oxon. 1677.

* Ennead. iii. lib. viii. cap. 10.

I would

I would obſerve by the way, that Moſes and the prophets under the Old Teſtament, as well as our Saviour and his apoſtles under the New, acted upon far nobler principles. They did not pretend a neceſſity for leading the people into wrong notions of religion, and into a worſhip unſuitable to the Divine Majeſty. Animated by a holy zeal for the glory of God, and aſſured of his divine aſſiſtance, they taught the people to worſhip an inviſible Deity in a pure and ſpiritual manner, without corporeal images and repreſentations, and were not for dividing their religious homage between the great Lord of the univerſe, and his creatures and ſubjects, or parcelling out that worſhip to a multitude of pretended Deities, which was due to him alone.

Another method which the philoſophers took to uphold and juſtify the Pagan theology was by allegorizing the fables of the poets and mythologiſts, which lay at the foundation of many of their ſacred rites. I had occaſion to take notice of this before, and obſerved, that the Stoics were particularly remarkable for their allegorical and phyſiological explications of thoſe fables: though many of the Pagans themſelves ridiculed the explications they gave as forced and unnatural. This however was the way that was almoſt univerſally taken by the philoſophers, after the Chriſtians ſet themſelves to expoſe the abſurdities of the Pagan mythology, and the religion founded upon it. Inſtead of abſolutely rejecting thoſe fables, many of which were of an immoral tendency, and altogether unworthy of the Deity, the philoſophers repreſented them as full of hidden wiſdom, and thereby confirmed the people in the opinion they had of the divine original and

authority of thoſe fables; which was of the moſt pernicious conſequence. Plotinus himſelf endeavoureth to accommodate the poetical fables and theogony to his own ſcheme of philoſophy (*p*). And all the latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans interpreted thoſe fables in a phyſical ſenſe, and applied them to the phænomena of nature. A remarkable inſtance of which we have in Porphyry's interpretation of Saturn's emaſculating his father Cœlus (*q*), tho' this is one of the fables which Plato repreſents as not fit to be tolerated in the commonwealth, whatever allegorical ſenſe might be put upon it.

Even the Egyptian idolatry in worſhipping ſeveral kinds of animals, which was ridiculed for its abſurdity by many of the common Pagans in other countries, found advocates among the philoſophers. Celſus obſerves, that the Egyptians looked upon the brute animals they worſhipped to be a kind of ſymbols of God, τίνα αὐτὰ θεῦ σύμβολα, and that in the veneration they paid to thoſe animals they deſigned to honour the eternal ideas; and therefore blames the Chriſtians for deriding them (*r*). And others of

(*p*) Plotin. Ennead. v. lib. viii. cap. 13. p. 554.

(*q*) Porphyr. de Muſarum Antro, p. 260, 261. in the Cambridge edition of Porphyr. de Abſtin.

(*r*) Origen contra Celſ. lib. iii. p. 121. For clearing this, it is proper to obſerve, that the Platoniſts ſpeak of eternal ideas in God as diſtinct Beings, ſubſiſting in and with the Supreme God. And Plato himſelf in his Timæus repreſents them as νοητὰ ζῶα, intelligible animals, the patterns and prototypes of thoſe that are ſenſible: and that they are immortal gods. He alſo teaches that thoſe ideas are the only things derived from the Supreme God, which have a real exiſtence: and

of the philoſophers who pretended to an extraordinary refinement, endeavoured to perſuade the world, that the Egyptian idolatry had a great deal of occult wiſdom contained in it. That great philoſopher Plotinus expreſſes a high eſteem of the wiſdom of the Egyptian prieſts in repreſenting divine myſteries under the figures of animals (*s*). Porphyry, after having given a great encomium of the piety, the abſtinence, the purity, the continence, the philoſophy of the Egyptian prieſts, and their unwearied diligence in their ſtudies (*t*), obſerves, that the divinity dwelleth not only in men, but in all animals: and that therefore they made the images of the gods in the figure of all animals, and ſometimes joined the bodies of wild beaſts and birds to the bodies of men (*u*): that in ſome parts of Egypt the lion is worſhipped, in others the wolf: and in every province they worſhipped the virtues and powers of the God who is over all, in thoſe animals which were moſt proper to that province; ſo that each province had its ſeveral gods: that they worſhipped all animals, and men too, in the village of Anubis: and that in their excellent wiſdom and intimate com-

and that all things in the world are only the images and repreſentations of thoſe ideas *. Thus it appears, that their philoſophy led to idolatry, and tended to furniſh excuſes even for the groſſeſt kinds of it: ſince they might worſhip every thing in nature under pretence of doing honour to the eternal ideas, and divine originals, of which all things in this world are the repreſentations.

(*s*) Ennead. lib. viii. cap. 6. p. 547.

(*t*) De Abſtin. lib. iv. ſect. 6. p. 149. edit. Cantab. 1655.

(*u*) Ibid. ſect. 9. p. 154.

* See Campbell's Neceſſ. Revel. p. 304, 305. Marg. note.

munion with the divinity, they came to know to which of the deities certain animals were dearer than men (*x*). And again he affirms, that it was through their wiſdom and extraordinary knowledge of God and of divine things that they came to the worſhip of animals: though he acknowledges that it might appear ſtrange to the unlearned, that wiſe men who were not carried away by the prejudices of the vulgar, and who had got above their ignorance, made thoſe things the objects of their worſhip, which ſeemed not to be worthy of honour. Thus it is that Porphyry endeavours to juſtify the Egyptian worſhip of animals. But if we may depend upon the account given by Philoſtratus, the Egyptians were not able to aſſign any reaſons to Apollonius Tyanæus of this their worſhip. The prieſts and wiſe men of Egypt (as hath been already obſerved) were very careful to conceal their theology from the people under hieroglyphics or ſymbolical characters, and allegorical fables. And at length it came to paſs, that the true original ſymbolical ſenſe, being a ſecret tranſmitted but to few, was in a great meaſure loſt and forgotten among thoſe pretended wiſe men themſelves. This ſufficiently appears from Plutarch's book of Iſis and Oſiris, which plainly ſhews, that notwithſtanding the high opinion that philoſopher had entertained of the wiſdom of the Egyptians, there was a great deal of darkneſs and confuſion in their theology, which was full of monſtrous fables, taken by the vulgar in the literal ſenſe, and in the interpretation of which their learned men and prieſts were very much divided.

(*x*) De Abſtin. lib. iv. ſect. 9. p. 155. edit. Cantab.

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The laſt thing I would here obſerve with regard to the philoſophers is, that ſome of them who were thought to have the ſublimeſt notions of the Divinity ſeemed to be againſt all external worſhip of the Supreme God. It was before ſhewn, that Plato did not propoſe him to the people as the object of public worſhip, as being incomprehenſible, and not to be named or expreſſed in words (*y*). Apollonius Tyanæus, as appears by a paſſage cited by Euſebius, from a book of his upon Sacrifices, was of opinion, that "no ſenſible thing was fit to be offered or dedicated to the God "whom

(*y*) The account Plato and the Platoniſts give of the firſt Principle, who in their theology is the firſt and higheſt God, is perfectly unintelligible. They ſuppoſe him to be a ſimple unity, or unity itſelf, ſo ſimple, that, as Plotinus ſpeaks, "no-"thing can be predicated of it, not being, nor eſſence, nor life, becauſe it is above "all theſe things *." He ſets himſelf to ſhew that the firſt principle, which he after Plato calls τὸ ἀγαθὸν, is not intellect, becauſe intellect implies multiplicity †. "When therefore," ſays he, "you ſpeak of the ἀγαθὸν, or good itſelf, you muſt "add nothing to it even in thought.—You ought not to add to it intellect or in-"telligence, leſt you ſhould add ſomething alien from it, and ſo of one you will "make two, intellect and good.—ποιήσεις δύο νοῦν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ‡." Thus the firſt principle was not to have any thing predicated of it, nor conſequently any attributes aſcribed to it for fear of deſtroying its unity. Nor would they allow that the firſt tranſcendental unity, the τὸ Ἓν or ἀγαθὸν, which is ſimply and abſolutely one, had any thing properly to do either in the creation of the world, or the government of it. Numenius a celebrated Platonic philoſopher, in a paſſage quoted from him by Euſebius, gives it as Plato's doctrine, that "it was not fitting that the firſt Prin-"ciple ſhould [δημιουργεῖν] act as a Demiurgus or maker of the world." And he afterwards mentions it as a thing certain, and which admits of no doubt, that "the "firſt God is idle or vacant from all works: but that the demiurgical God go-"verns all things, going through heaven.—Τὸν μὲν πρῶτον θεὸν ἀργὸν εἶναι ἔργων ξυμ-"πάντων καὶ βασιλέα, τὸν δημιουργικὸν δὲ θεὸν ἡγεμονεῖν δι' οὐρανοῦ ἰόντα ‖." The ſame philoſopher repreſents Plato as upbraiding men for being ignorant of the firſt God: for that he whom they regarded as the firſt, viz. the Demiurgus, is not really the firſt, but there is another more antient and more divine §. It is upon this foun-

* Plotin. Ennead. iii. lib. viii. cap. 9. † Ibid. cap. 7, 8. ‡ Ibid. cap. 10. ‖ Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. xi. cap. 18. p. 537. B, C. edit. Paris 1628. § Ibid. p. 539. C.

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" whom we call the Firſt," and whom he afterwards deſcribes to be the God over all: " there being no ſenſible thing which is not a " kind of pollution compared with him: but that he ought to be " worſhipped by the word or reaſon which is inward, not that " which proceedeth out of the mouth: and that we muſt aſk " good things from the Beſt of Beings, by that which is beſt and " moſt excellent in us; and this is intellect; which does not " need any organ or inſtrument of ſpeech (*z*)." To the ſame purpoſe Porphyry, who ſeems to have had this very paſſage of Apollonius in view, declares, that " as a certain wiſe man hath " obſerved, we ought not to offer up or dedicate any ſenſible " thing to that God who is over all: for there is no material " thing which is not impure to him who is abſtracted from all " matter: neither is any outward word proper to be offered to " him which is uttered by the voice, nor even that which is in- " ternal, if it be polluted with any paſſion: but we muſt worſhip " him in ſilence and pure thought (*a*)." Thus under pretence of

dation, that the emperor Julian pretends that the Hebrews did not know the firſt God, becauſe they ſuppoſed the Maker of the world to be the firſt God, whereas there is a God before him, and higher than he *. This firſt Platonick principle therefore ſeems to be an abſtract metaphyſical Deity, very different from the true ſupreme God as deſcribed to us in the Sacred Writings, whoſe underſtanding is infinite, who is the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and who governeth all things by his wiſe and good providence. For none of theſe things could be properly predicated of the Platonic firſt God, whom they repreſent as eternally unactive, idle as an Epicurean Deity, having no concern with our world: nor is he therefore the proper object of our prayers and invocations, our thankſgivings and praiſes.

(*z*) Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iv. cap. 13. p. 150.

(*a*) Ibid. cap. 11. p. 149.

* Apud Cyril. contra Julian, lib. iv.

inward religion and pure devotion, the outward expreſſions of it were to be neglected: and the only true God, who alone deſerves to be worſhipped, is not to have any outward homage rendered to him at all. This is certainly a falſe refinement, and which tendeth in a great meaſure to baniſh all appearance of religion, as it ſignifieth the worſhip of the one true ſupreme God, out of the world. It is however to be obſerved, that though ſome of the more refined Patoniſts and Pythagoreans declared againſt offering up any external material oblation or ſacrifice to him whom they regarded as the firſt and higheſt God, yet they recommended the obſervation of the public rites and ceremonies of religion, and the worſhip of the gods appointed by the laws, of which ſacrifices and oblations made a principal part: a plain proof, that the Pagan public worſhip was not, according to their notion of it, the worſhip of the one Supreme God, but was wholly offered up to inferior deities, or to dæmons.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

The ſtate of the Heathen world with reſpect to their notions of Divine Providence. The belief of a Providence ſuperintending human affairs obtained generally among the vulgar Pagans: but the Providence they acknowledged was parcelled out among a multiplicity of gods and goddeſſes. Their notions of Providence were alſo in other reſpects very imperfect and confuſed. The doctrine of the philoſophers concerning Providence conſidered. Many of them, and of the learned and polite Pagans denied a Providence. Of thoſe who profeſſed to acknowledge it, ſome confined it to heaven and heavenly things. Others ſuppoſed it to extend to the earth and to mankind, yet ſo as only to exerciſe a general care and ſuperintendency, but not to extend to individuals. Others ſuppoſed all things, the leaſt as well as the greateſt, to be under the care of Providence: but they aſcribed this not to the Supreme God, who they thought was above concerning himſelf with ſuch things as theſe, and committed the care of them wholly to inferior deities. The great advantage of Revelation ſhewn for inſtructing men in the doctrine of Providence: and the noble idea given of it in the Holy Scriptures.

NEXT to the exiſtence of God, that which is of the greateſt importance to be known by us is, that he governs the world by his Providence; and particularly that he takes care of men and their affairs. Without a belief of Providence there can be no ſuch thing as religion. This the wiſeſt of the Heathens were

were ſenſible of. Cicero in the beginning of his celebrated books of the nature of the gods, ſpeaking of thoſe philoſophers who maintained that the gods take no care at all of mankind or their concernments, obſerves, that " if their opinion were true, there " would be no piety, no ſanctity, no religion——that if the gods " do not mind what men do, or what events befal them, there " is no reaſon to pray to them, or worſhip them: and that if reli- " gion and piety be taken away from amongſt men, the greateſt " confuſion and diſorder would enſue in human life: and toge- " ther with piety, mutual fidelity, and the ſocial ties which bind " mankind together, and that moſt excellent virtue juſtice, would " be baniſhed out of the world.—Sunt enim philoſophi et fuerunt, " qui omnino nullam habere cenſerent rerum humanarum pro- " curationem deos. Quorum ſi vera ſententia eſt, quæ poteſt " eſſe pietas? quæ ſanctitas? quæ religio?—quibus ſublatis, per- " turbatio vitæ ſequitur, et magna confuſio. Atque haud ſcio, " an pietate adverſus deos ſublatâ, fides etiam et ſocietas generis " humani, et una excellentiſſima virtus juſtitia tollatur (*a*)."

If we look back to the moſt antient times, the doctrine of a Providence ſeems to have been a remarkable part of the univerſal tradition derived from the firſt ages. Plutarch ſpeaking of the Deity and a Providence, " ἡ πρόνοια καὶ τὸ θεῖον," calls it " the pious " faith derived from their fathers or anceſtors, from which " they ought not to depart.—τὴν εὐσεβῆ καὶ πάτριον μὴ προΐεσθαι

(*a*) De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 2.

"πίστιν (*b*)." Some notion of this was ſtill preſerved amidſt all the corruptions of the Pagan world. And to this was principally owing whatever there was of order, ſobriety, and good government maintained among men. The ableſt politicans were ſenſible of this, and therefore encouraged the belief of it among the people; and all the antient legiſlators proceeded upon it as a principle, as is clearly ſhewn by the learned Biſhop of Glouceſter in his Divine Legation of Moſes demonſtrated. They who believed that there were ſuperior inviſible powers, generally believed alſo that they had a great influence on human affairs, and on the proſperous and adverſe events which befal mankind. This is every where ſuppoſed in the writings of the poets, who uſually repreſented things according to the popular notions, and were themſelves the inſtructors of the people. Cicero in his Oratio de Haruſpic. Reſponſ. n. 9. mentions it to the praiſe of the antient Romans, that they excelled all nations in piety, and eſpecially in this eminent point of wiſdom, that they clearly perceived that all things are governed by the providence of the immortal gods (*c*). And in his ſecond book of Laws, cap. 7. he repreſents this doc-

(*b*) Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 402. E. Francof.

(*c*) It is an obſervation of Lord Bolingbroke, that the belief of a particular Providence was a principal cauſe of the proſperity of the Roman commonwealth: and that though the Roman religion eſtabliſhed by Numa was very abſurd, yet by keeping up an awe of ſuperior power, and the belief of a providence that ordered the courſe of events, it produced all the marvellous effects which Machiavel, after Polybius, Cicero, and Plutarch, aſcribes to it. Bolingbroke's Works, vol. IV. p. 421. edit. 4to. And when in the latter times of the Roman republic, they began to throw off all ſenſe of religion, and regard to Divine Providence, their ſtate declined, and they fell from their antient virtue and glory.

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trine as both true in itſelf, and of great advantage to the public, and that therefore care ought to be taken, that the citizens ſhould in the firſt place have a firm perſuaſion of it fixed in their minds. I had occaſion to quote both theſe paſſages before, and need not repeat them here.

But though the belief of a Divine Providence, as extending to mankind and their affairs, was generally propagated among the Pagans, and was no doubt of great advantage, yet as they fell from the right knowledge of the one true God, and became more and more immerſed in idolatry and polytheiſm; ſo their notions of Providence became wrong and confuſed too, and were debaſed with many corrupt mixtures. The providence they acknowledged was the providence of the divinities they adored. It was parcelled out among a multiplicity of gods and goddeſſes, among whom they ſuppoſed the adminiſtration of things to be diſtributed, as being "συνάρχοντες τῷ θεῷ—co-rulers with God," and "κοίνωνοι τῆς ἀρχῆς—ſharers with him in his empire," as Maximus Tyrius expreſſeth it (*d*). They were regarded as having different provinces belonging to them; and many of the people, as Dr. Cudworth obſerves, looked upon them to be ſovereign and independent in their ſeveral provinces. To them therefore both jointly and ſeverally they offered up prayers and ſacrifices, for obtaining the good things they ſtood in need of, and for averting the evils and calamities they feared: whilſt the one true God, the ori-

(*d*) Max. Tyr. Diſſert. i. p. 5. et 19. Oxon. 1675.

ginal author of all good, and the ſupreme Diſpoſer of all events, was overlooked and neglected.

Plato in his Timæus declares concerning the Pagans in his time, that " all thoſe who had never ſo ſmall a ſhare of ſobriety " or prudence, were wont in the undertaking of any affair, whe- " ther ſmall or great, always to invoke God.—Πάντες ὅσοι κατὰ " βραχὺ σωφροσύνης μετέχησι ἐπὶ πάσῃ ὁρμῇ ᾗ σμίκρου ᾗ μεγάλου " πράγματος θεὸν ἀεὶ ᾧ ἐπικαλῶσι (e)." A man that comes to read this, prepoſſeſſed with the notions he has received from Scripture, will be apt to underſtand it as ſignifying that the ſober Heathens were generally wont in every affair to invoke the one true God, and addreſs themſelves to him for his aſſiſtance and bleſſing. And it has been actually quoted by ſome learned men for this purpoſe. And indeed ſeparately taken it has that appearance. But if we carefully examine it, we ſhall find that this is not the intention of that paſſage. It only ſignifies that they were wont on ſuch occaſions to invoke a God, as it might properly be rendered, i. e. ſome God or other, and probably the patron Deity, πάτριος θεός, as Plato ſometimes expreſſes it, or ſome of the gods appointed by law (f). This appears from what goes before and follows that

(e) Plat. Oper. p. 526. E. Lugd. 1590.

(f) Though the Pagans generally ſpeak of the gods in the plural, yet it was not unuſual with them to mention God in the ſingular number. Some of the antient fathers and apologiſts for Chriſtianity, particularly Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Lactantius, take notice of this, and of ſome forms of ſpeech which obtained among the Heathens of that time: ſuch as " Deus videt, Deus reddet, " Deus inter nos judicabit, ſi Deus voluerit." " God ſeeth, God will recom- " penſe,

that paſſage. In the words immediately preceding Socrates tells Timæus, that he ought in the beginning of his diſcourſe to invoke the gods according to law. To which Timæus anſwers by obſerving in the paſſage now cited, that it was uſual for all prudent perſons in the beginning of every work to invoke God, or a God; "how much more," ſays he, "is it neceſſary for us, when we are "about to diſcourſe of the univerſe, whether it was made, or was "without beginning, to invoke the gods and goddeſſes, that we "may ſpeak in a manner agreeable to them, and conſiſtent with "ourſelves (*g*)." To the ſame purpoſe Plato obſerves in the beginning of his eighth epiſtle; that "it is neceſſary in all things "we think or ſay to begin from the gods.—ἀπὸ θεῶν χρὴ πάντα "ἀρχόμενον ἀεὶ λέγειν τε καὶ νοεῖν." And it is a precept of Socrates mentioned by Xenophon in his Oeconomics, that "we ſhould "endeavour to begin every work with the gods.—πειρᾶσθαι σὺν "τοῖς θεοῖς ἄρχεσθαι παντὸς ἔργου." Varro, as appears from a paſſage I mentioned before, thought he had done a conſiderable ſer-

"penſe, God will judge between us, if God will;" and the like. This they regard as a kind of natural teſtimony to the unity and perfections of God; or in Tertullian's language, "teſtimonium animæ naturaliter Chriſtianæ." But there is no great ſtreſs to be laid upon this. Dr. Cudworth himſelf owns, that the Heathens ſometimes uſed the word God indefinitely, and in a general way, when they had not the Supreme God particularly in view. They alſo ſometimes ſpoke of God in the ſingular, when they only intended to ſignify ſome one of the many deities they adored. The not attending to this, has ſometimes led learned men aſtray in their quotations, who have judged of the meaning of paſſages in Pagan writers by their own Chriſtian ideas. It may be added, that after the Goſpel had made ſome progreſs in the world, and the Chriſtians came to have frequent intercourſe with the Pagans, ſuch a manner of expreſſion as hath been mentioned might be more frequently uſed, even among the vulgar Pagans, than it was before.

(*g*) Plat. Oper. p. 526. E. Lugd. 1590.

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vice to his countrymen and fellow-citizens, in directing them what god or goddeſs they were to apply to in each particular caſe and circumſtance.

That the vulgar Pagans, though they believed a Providence, had wrong and defective notions of it, appears from a remarkable paſſage of Xenophon, in which he obſerves, that Socrates thought "that the gods take care of men, not in the manner which οἱ πολλοὶ the many ſuppoſe," (where he ſeems to ſpeak of the generality of the Athenians themſelves) "they think, ſaith he, that "there are ſome things which the gods know, and ſome things "which they do not know. But Socrates was of opinion that the "gods know all things, and are every where preſent (*b*)." See the paſſage quoted above, p. 331.

The Pagans were alſo led into a wrong judgment of Providence by the notions they generally entertained of fortune, which they regarded as a blind, capricious, inconſtant deity, and as having a principal ſway in the events of things in this lower world. This tended to take them off from that religious dependence upon God, and ingenuous truſt in him, and that reſignation to his diſpoſing will, which is an eminent part of true religion and godlineſs. There is a remarkable paſſage of the Elder Pliny, which it may not be amiſs to mention here. "Through the whole world," ſaith he "in all places, and at all times, Fortune is univerſally in-"voked by all perſons. This alone has the praiſe or blame of "every thing, and is at the ſame time worſhipped and reproach-

(*b*) Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. cap. 1. ſegm. 19.

"ed;

" ed; eſteemed by the moſt of mankind to be blind, uncertain, " various, and inconſtant, a favourer of ſuch as are unworthy: " to this all events are attributed both proſperous and adverſe; " and in the whole management of human affairs this fills up " both ſides of the account."—" Toto quippe mundo, in locis " omnibus, omnibuſque horis, omnium vocibus, Fortuna ſola in- " vocatur, ſola laudatur, ſola arguitur, et cum conviciis colitur: " volubilis à pleriſque verò et cæca etiam exiſtimata, vaga, incon- " ſtans, incerta, varia, indignorum fautrix: huic omnia expenſa, " huic omnia feruntur accepta, et in totâ ratione mortalium utram- " que paginam facit (*i*)." To the ſame purpoſe Salluſt obſerves, that " Fortune rules in every thing."—" Fortuna in omni re do- " minatur." And Menander ſays, that " Fortune is the king or " tyrant of all the gods.—*πάντων τύραννος ἡ τύχη ἐστὶν τῶν θεῶν* (*k*)." Lord Herbert owns, that Fortune was had in great veneration among the Pagans, and looked upon by ſome of them as a deity. Both good and bad fortune, " bona et mala fortuna," were worſhipped, and had images and altars. Various temples were erected to Fortune both among the Greeks and Romans: and particularly there was a famous temple of fortune at Prænesſte (*l*).

Another thing to be obſerved with regard to the vulgar notions of Providence among the Heathens is, that they commonly conſidered it as extending only to the outward commodities of life;

(*i*) Plin. Hiſt. Nat. lib. ii. cap. 7.

(*k*) Apud Stob. Eclog. Phyſic. cap. 10. p. 15. Edit. Plantin.

(*l*) Herb. de Relig. Gentil. cap. 9. p. 80, et ſeq. 8vo. Amſt. 1700.

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and therefore they applied to the gods for riches, health, proſperity and ſucceſs in their affairs, but not for wiſdom, or virtue, or moral endowments. There is a famous paſſage to this purpoſe in Cicero's third book of the Nature of the Gods, which has been often taken notice of. Cotta is there introduced as ſaying, that "all men attributed the external commodities they enjoyed, "their plenty of corn, wine, oil, and fruits, and every conve- "nience and proſperous event of life, to the gods: but no man "ever acknowledged his having received his virtue from God. "For who," ſays he, "ever gives thanks to the gods for his "being a good man? But for his being poſſeſſed of riches and "honours, and preſerved from dangers, he does. It is on the "account of theſe things that they give Jupiter the appellation "of Optimus et Maximus, the Greateſt and the Beſt: not that "he makes us juſt, temperate, wiſe, but that he gives us health, "ſafety, and affluence." And he adds, that "this is the judg- "ment of all mankind, that the gifts of fortune are to be aſked "of God, but that a man is to expect wiſdom only from him- "ſelf."—Hæc quidem omnes mortales ſic habent; externas "commoditates, vineta, ſegetes, oliveta, ubertatem frugum et "fructuum, omnem denique commoditatem proſperitatemque "vitæ a diis ſe habere: virtutem autèm nemo unquàm acceptam "deo retulit.—Num quis quòd bonus vir eſſet gratias diis agit "unquàm? At quòd dives, quòd honoratus, quòd incolumis; "Jovemque Optimum et Maximum ob eas res appellant: non "quòd nos juſtos, temperatos, ſapientes efficiat, ſed quòd ſalvos, "incolumes, opulentos, copioſos. Judicium hoc omnium mor- "talium eſt, fortunam a deo petendam, a ſeipſo ſumendam eſſe

" ſapientiam (*l*)." This appears to me to be too univerſally expreſſed. There were, I doubt not, in the Heathen world perſons that had a better way of thinking, as might be ſhewn particularly with regard to Socrates, Plato, Epictetus, Antoninus, and even ſome of the poets. But if this had not been the notion generally entertained, both among thoſe of the higher and lower rank, a man of ſuch learning and eminence as Cotta, and who knew the world ſo well, would not have been introduced by Cicero as aſſerting it ſo poſitively and in ſuch extenſive terms. And it is agreeable to what our Saviour ſaith, when ſpeaking of the commodities of this preſent life he declares, that " after all theſe " things do the Gentiles ſeek : " i. e. they ſeek them in the firſt and chiefeſt place : in oppoſition to which he exhorteth his diſciples, to " ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs." Matt. vi. 32, 33.

It may be farther obſerved in relation to the notions of providence which obtained among the Pagans, that not only did they invoke a great variety of thoſe whom they looked upon as benevolent deities for aſſiſtance and direction, and for obtaining the good things they ſtood in need of; but they were alſo wont, on ſeveral occaſions, to offer up prayers and ſacrifices, and to render religious worſhip, to evil and malignant dæmons, regarded by themſelves as ſuch, from an apprehenſion that they had a great ſhare in the adminiſtration of things, and in order to appeaſe and

(*l*) De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 36. p. 335, 336. edit. Davis 2da. The Reader will obſerve here that he ſpeaks of God in the ſingular number, and of gods in the plural, and makes uſe of one or other of theſe terms indifferently.

humour them, and keep them from doing miſchief: for the proof of this I would refer the reader to what is ſaid above, p. 148, et ſeq. And this certainly argueth very wrong notions of Divine Providence, as if God were not able or inclined to protect his faithful ſervants and true worſhippers againſt the power and malice of evil beings.

Having conſidered the popular belief of Providence among the Heathens, let us next conſider that of the philoſophers. Many of them, inſtead of rectifying the vulgar notions on this head, would not allow that there is any Providence at all. And in this as well as ſeveral other inſtances they erred more than the common people. The doctrine of the Epicureans is well known, who, though they pretended to acknowlege that there are gods, abſolutely denied that they concerned themſelves about men, or any of their actions or the events relating to them. But this was far from being peculiar to that ſect. Plato, who lived before Epicurus, takes notice in his tenth book of Laws, of many in his time, who profeſſed to believe the gods, and yet did not believe that they minded human affairs.

Cicero in the introduction to his firſt book of the Nature of the Gods, repreſents this as one of the principal things which were controverted with great eagerneſs among the philoſophers, and about which they differed mightily in their opinions, Whether the gods are wholly idle and unactive, and take no care at all of the adminiſtration of things; or whether, on the contrary, all things were by them both made and conſtituted from the beginning, and

and are ſtill moved and governed by them, and ſhall be ſo to infinite ages. " Quod verò maxumè rem cauſamque continet; " utrum nihil agant dii, nihil moliantur, et ab omni curatione " et adminiſtratione rerum vacent: an contra ab his et a principio " omnia facta et conſtituta ſint, et ad infinitum ſemper regantur, " atque moveantur, in primis magna diſſenſio eſt." And accordingly not only is Velleius the Epicurean there introduced as ridiculing the doctrine of Divine Providence; but Cotta the Academic employs all the force of his wit and eloquence againſt it, and ſets himſelf to ſhew that the gods take no care of men, and the actions and events relating to them. This opinion ſeems to have made no ſmall progreſs in the polite world even among the Romans. That antient poet Ennius declares his belief, that there are gods, but that they take no notice of human actions, nor give themſelves any concern about them: and what led him to this was the obſerving the calamities which befal good men, and the proſperity of the wicked.

" Ego deum genus eſſe ſemper dixi, et dicam cælitum:
" Sed eos non curare opinor, quid agat humanum genus;
" Nam ſi curent, bene bonis ſit malè malis; quod nunc abeſt (*m*)."

That great man Tacitus having repreſented it " as uncertain " in his judgment, whether human affairs were governed by " fate and immutable neceſſity, or by chance," obſerves, that in this matter " the wiſeſt of the antients and their followers were " of different ſentiments: and that many had this opinion fixed

(*m*) Apud Cicero de Divinat. lib. ii. cap. 50. et de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 32.

" in their minds, that neither our beginning nor our end, nor " men at all, are minded by the gods.—Mihi hæc ac talia au- " dienti, in incerto judicium eſt, fato ne res humanæ, ac neceſ- " ſitate immutabili, an forte volvantur: quippe ſapientiſſimos, " quique eorum ſectam æmulantur diverſos reperies, et multis " inſitam opinionem non initia noſtra, non finem, non denique " homines, diis curæ (*n*). And that he himſelf was much inclined to that opinion appears from another paſſage, where ſpeaking of the portents and preſages in the reign of Nero, he ſays, that theſe things happened ſo apparently without any interpoſition or direction from the gods, that Nero continued ſeveral years after both in his imperial rule, and in the perpetration of the moſt flagitious crimes.

Pliny, the great naturaliſt, lived about the ſame time with Tacitus, and he repreſents it as ridiculous to imagine, that the God who is ſupreme takes any care of human affairs: and adds, That without doubt the Divinity would be polluted with ſuch a ſad and troubleſome miniſtry or employment. " Irridendum verò " agere curam rerum humanarum illud quicquid eſt ſummum. " Anne tam triſti et multiplici miniſterio non pollui credamus " dubitemuſve?" Hiſt. Nat. lib. ii. cap. 7.

Cæcilius, a learned and ingenious Roman lawyer, probably expreſſes the ſenſe of many gentlemen among the Pagans of that time, when he urges it as an objection againſt the profeſſors of

(*n*) Tacit. Annal. viii.

Chriſtianity,

Chriſtianity, that they aſſerted a Providence as extending to the affairs and actions of men, and even to their moſt ſecret thoughts. He repreſents it as an abſurd thing in the Chriſtians to believe, that " their God, whom they can neither ſee nor ſhew, inſpects " diligently into the manners of all men, into their actions, and " even their words and hidden thoughts: and that he is every " where preſent, troubleſome, and impertinently buſy and curious; " ſince he intereſteth himſelf in all things that are done, and " thruſteth himſelf into all places: whereas he can neither attend " to every particular whilſt he is employed about the whole, nor " be able to take care of the whole, being buſied about particu- " lars.—Chriſtiani quæ monſtra, quæ portenta confingunt? Deum " illum ſuum, quem nec oſtendere poſſunt nec videre, in omni- " um mores, omnium actus, verba etiàm, et occultas cogita- " tiones diligenter inquirere, diſcurrentem ſcilicet, atque ubique " præſentem, moleſtum illum volunt, inquietum, impudenter " curioſum: ſiquidem inſtet factis omnibus, locis omnibus inter- " ceptus, cum nec ſingulis inſervire poſſit per univerſa diſtrictus, " nec univerſis ſufficit, in ſingulis occupatus (*o*)." This was the Epicurean way of talking againſt Providence, as appears from what Velleius in Cicero ſays on that ſubject (*p*): and which owes all its force to their meaſuring the Divinity by themſelves, and ſuppoſing the gods to be limited, imperfect, and indolent beings.

As to thoſe of the philoſophers who aſſerted a Providence, Epictetus repreſents them as of different ſentiments concerning

(*o*) Min. Fel. p. 95. Edit. var. 1672.

(*p*) De nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 20.

the nature and extent of it. Some of them, he ſays, admitted a Providence in great and heavenly things, but in nothing upon earth (*q*). Others ſuppoſed it to take care of things both in heaven and earth; but only in general, not with reſpect to individuals. Others, like Ulyſſes in Homer, and Socrates, held that Providence extendeth to individuals, and that not the leaſt motion or action can be concealed from God (*r*). In this Socrates was followed by Plato, who, in his tenth book of Laws, endeavours to prove, that mankind, and the things relating to them, not only great matters, but even the ſmalleſt, are under the care of Divine Providence; and argues very well upon it. The ſame thing he

(*q*) This is ſaid to have been Ariſtotle's opinion. It is true, that in his Nicomachian Ethics he ſeems to admit the ſuppoſition, that Providence concerns itſelf about men and their affairs; though he ſpeaks of it doubtfully. If," ſays he, " the " gods exerciſe any care at all about men, as it ſeems —εἰ τίς ἐπιμέλεια τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπο θεῶν γίνεται, ὡς δοκεῖ." Ariſt. Oper. tom. II. p. 140. Paris 1629. But many of the antients charge him with holding that Providence does not extend to the things which are below the moon. Chalcidius poſitively aſſerts it in his commentary on Plato's Timæus, p. 369. at the end of Fabricius's edition of Hippolitus, Hamburg. 1716. A very learned writer aſſerts that this is a calumny that Chalcidius raiſed of him. But Plutarch, who lived before Chalcidius, plainly ſignifies the ſame thing. De Placit. Philoſoph. lib. ii. cap. 3. So alſo does Clemens Alexand. Strom. v. p. 700. edit. Potter: and Potter in his notes quotes other teſtimonies to the ſame purpoſe. Stobæus repreſents Ariſtotle as maintaining that heavenly things are governed by Providence, but not things on earth. Eclog. Phyſic. cap. 25. p. 48. edit. Plant. Atticus the Platoniſt, as quoted by Euſebius, paſſes a ſevere cenſure upon him on this account for ſubſtracting men and their affairs from the care of Divine Providence. Apud Euſeb. Præparat. Evangel. lib. 15. cap. 5. p. 798. et ſeq. and Proclus ſpeaking of thoſe phyſiologers, who, though they acknowledged the heavenly bodies to partake of mind and Divinity, yet left the ſublunary world to float up and down without Providence, add, that theſe afterwards Ariſtotle followed. See Cudworth's Intel. Syſt. p. 237. 2d edit.

(*r*) Epict. Diſſert. lib. i. cap. 12. init.

aſſerts

aſſerts in his Epinomis; concerning which ſee above, p. 331. But, as was there obſerved, in his whole diſputation on that ſubject he ſpeaks of the Providence of the gods in the plural, and even of the gods which the laws directed them to worſhip. And particularly he ſuppoſes, that the dominion and ſuperintendency of things in this lower world was veſted in the ſtars: whom therefore, both in his tenth book of Laws and in his Epinomis, he ſtrongly recommendeth to the worſhip of the people. And he treats the doctrine of thoſe who taught, that the ſun, moon, and ſtars are not animated, and could not take cognizance of human affairs, as an inlet to Atheiſm, and a denial of Providence.

It was not merely in a way of accommodation to the popular manner of expreſſion, that Plato and others ſpoke of the Providence of the gods. For the ſyſtem of the Platoniſts, and others of the philoſophers, who ſeemed to entertain the moſt exalted thoughts of the Divinity, was this: that he whom they regarded as the firſt and higheſt God did not concern himſelf with mankind or their affairs, but committed the adminiſtration and management of them wholly to inferior deities (*s*). It is not there-

(*s*) It was obſerved before in the ſecond chapter of this work, p. 90. marg. note, that this notion that the higheſt God of all is above concerning himſelf with the affairs of men, and hath devolved the care of them upon inferior deities, obtained among many of thoſe Pagan nations, which retained the idea of one Supreme God. And that this was a principal ſource of the prevailing polytheiſm, ſince it occaſioned their offering up their worſhip, prayers and ſacrifices to inferior deities, on whom they thought they depended for all good things, whilſt the Supreme God, who, they imagined, did not concern himſelf about them, was neglected. To correct this error, and aſſert the univerſal and particular Providence of the one Supreme God, was one great deſign of the Jewiſh revelation, and is farther confirmed by the Goſpel of our Saviour.

fore

fore without reaſon that Lord Bolingbroke obſerves, that "the "Pagans reduced the Monad or firſt Unity in ſome ſort to an ab- "ſtract or notional being, and baniſhed him almoſt entirely out "of the ſyſtem of his works (*t*)." Lord Herbert ſays concerning the Pagans in general, that they exempted the higheſt God, as being moſt happy, from cares. "Deum ſummum, tanquam "beatiſſimum, curis eximebant olim Gentiles (*u*)." And he elſe- where obſerves, that among thoſe who believed one Supreme God, many thought that he did not meddle with the things of this lower world; but that he hath withdrawn himſelf with the ſuper- celeſtial gods his companions from the view of mortals, as being of ſo ſublime a nature, that no ſharpneſs of ſight or underſtanding could reach to them: inſtead of which he hath brought forth into view thoſe celeſtial deities which we call the Sun, Moon, and Heaven. Plutarch in his tract de Placit. Philoſoph. argues pretty largely, that it is unworthy of the majeſty of the Supreme Being, and inconſiſtent with his happineſs, to buſy himſelf about the af- fairs of men (*x*). There is a long and remarkable paſſage of Apu- leius which it may be proper to take ſome notice of on this occa- ſion: the purport of it is this, that the Supreme God is ſo far above us, that he is ſcarce to be approached by the moſt purified human intellect: and that there is no immediate intercourſe be- tween us and the firſt claſs of ſubordinate deities viſible or invi- ſible: but the intercourſe is carried on by intermediate powers

(*t*) Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 468. edit. 4to.

(*u*) Relig. Gentil. cap. xi. p. 138.

(*x*) De Placit. Philoſ. lib. i. cap. 7. tom. II. p. 881.

call:

called dæmons, who are appointed to take care of every thing here below, which it is not becoming the majeſty of the celeſtial gods to meddle with.—" Neque enim pro majeſtate deûm cœleſtium " fuerit hæc curare (*y*)." Porphyry alſo ſuppoſes that the higheſt God of all doth not concern himſelf with terreſtrial and corporeal things: and that it belongeth to the inferior deities to grant us the good things neceſſary to this life, of which the firſt fruits are to be offered to them (*z*). Yea, as was before obſerved, he ſuppoſes that evil dæmons had a power of beſtowing riches, and other things relating to the body, which were uſually accounted good; and that therefore it is neceſſary for thoſe who would obtain theſe things, to conciliate their favour by prayers and ſacrifices.

None of the philoſophers were accounted more zealous aſſerters of Divine Providence as extending its care to mankind, than the Stoics. A remarkable ſpecimen of this we have in what is largely urged to this purpoſe by Balbus the repreſentative of the Stoic ſect, in Cicero's ſecond book of the Nature of the Gods. Yet he, as Plato had done before him, generally ſpeaks of the gods in the plural, and the point he undertakes to prove is, that the world is adminiſtered by the Providence of the gods; and in the courſe of his argument he lays a particular ſtreſs upon this, that the ſtars are animated, that they are living rational beings, and that they are gods. See ſome paſſages quoted to this purpoſe above, p. 319. which I need not here repeat. In like manner Plutarch in his

(*y*) Apul. de Dæmone Socratis.

(*z*) Porphyr. de Abſtin. lib. ii. ſect. 34. et 37. p. 78. et 80. Cantab. 1655.

tract againſt Colotes the Epicurean, reckons it among the things which are generally believed, and which he thinks are evident, and cannot reaſonably be controverted, that "there is a Provi-"dence of the gods, and that the ſun and moon are animated, "whom all men worſhip, and to whom they offer up prayers "and ſacrifices (*a*)." Thus this great philoſopher ſeems to put the doctrine of a Providence, and that of the ſtars being animated and to be worſhipped as gods, upon the ſame foundation, as if they were equally neceſſary to be believed, and there was the ſame evidence for the one as for the other. And this muſt certainly have had a bad effect: ſince thoſe who could not think it reaſonable to believe that the ſtars are living and intelligent beings, and exerciſe a care over men and their affairs, were in danger of being led to deny a Providence; the proof of which, according to the reaſoning of theſe philoſophers, and even of Plato himſelf, depended upon the ſame principles.

Balbus the Stoic, whom I have juſt now mentioned, after having ſaid many excellent things to ſhew the care which Divine Providence exerciſeth towards the human race in general, proceeds to prove, that the welfare of individuals or particular perſons is conſulted and provided for by the immortal gods. "Nec verò uni-"verſo generi hominum ſolum, ſed etiam ſingulis a diis immorta-"libus conſuli et provideri ſolet (*b*)." But it appears from what he ſaith afterwards, that he does not intend by this to ſignify,

(*a*) Plut. adverſ. Colot. Oper. tom. ii. p. 1123.

(*b*) De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 65. p. 254.

that

that the care and interpoſition of Divine Providence extendeth to all individuals, but only to the more worthy and eminent; nor to all their concernments, but only to thoſe of greater importance. Having inſtanced in ſeveral of the moſt eminently great and virtuous men among the ancient Romans, he adds, that both Greece and Rome had produced many extraordinary perſons; none of whom became ſuch but by the aſſiſtance of God, or of a God; as that phraſe "juvante Deo" might there be rendered. For he had ſpoken of the immortal gods juſt before: and he obſerves immediately after, that for this reaſon the poets, and eſpecially Homer, aſſigned to their principal heroes certain gods to be their companions (*c*). He adds ſome farther proofs both that the gods take care of cities, and of particular perſons, i. e. of ſuch extraordinary perſons as thoſe whom he had mentioned. And accordingly he declares, that no man ever became great without a divine afflatus or influence. "Nemo igitur vir magnus ſine aliquo afflatu divino un-"quàm fuit (*d*)." But yet he thinks, that if a man's corn fields or vineyards ſhould be hurt by a tempeſt, we ought not to ſuppoſe, that Providence concerneth itſelf in ſuch things as theſe. "For the gods," ſaith he, "take care of great matters, and neg-"lect ſmall ones.—Magna dii curant, parva negligunt." Cotta

(*c*) De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 66. p. 255.

(*d*) Ibid. p. 256. Dr. Cudworth produces this paſſage, "juvante Deo," as a proof that Cicero uſes the word God in the ſingular emphatically and by way of eminency, to ſignify the one ſupreme God, the Lord of the univerſe, Intel. Syſt. p. 236. But this paſſage, if taken in connexion with the context, does not prove it, but is an inſtance of what was obſerved before, that the Pagans ſometimes uſed the word God in the ſingular, where it does not appear that they had the one Supreme God particularly in view. See above p. 380, marg. note.

in his anſwer to Balbus, in the third book of the Nature of the Gods, takes notice of this doctrine of the Stoics, that the gods neglected ſmall matters; and which they illuſtrated by this conſideration, that kings do not mind little occurrences in their kingdoms. He anſwers, that if they knowingly paſs them by and neglect them, it is a fault. But that the excuſe of ignorance cannot be made for a God, nor of want of power neither. He charges them with inconſiſtency, in pretending that the gods do not attend to all things, nor take care of the individuals of mankind, and yet that men ought to make prayers and vows to the gods, which ſuppoſes that the divine mind attends to particular perſons and their affairs; ſince it is by particular perſons that prayers and vows are made. "Vota ſuſcipi dicitis oportere: nempe "ſinguli vovent. Audit igitur mens divina etiàm de ſingulis (*e*)." This opinion of the Stoics, as repreſented by Balbus, is agreeable to that of Euripides, which is cited and approved by that great philoſopher Plutarch, that "God only concerns himſelf with the "greateſt things, and leaves the ſmaller to fortune (*f*)." It does not appear however, that the opinion expreſſed by Balbus was that of all the Stoics. For the famous Stoic Chryſippus is ſaid to have maintained, that Providence extendeth its care to all things, the leaſt and moſt inconſiderable not excepted: for which he is cenſured by Plutarch. And Epictetus and Antoninus appear to have been of the ſame ſentiments, but Seneca ſeems not to be ſatisfied about it. There is a remarkable paſſage in his 95th epiſtle, in which he repreſents it as neceſſary to know, "that the

(*e*) De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 36. et 39.

(*f*) Plut. de gerenda Repub. Oper. tom. II. p. 811.

"gods

" gods preſide over the world: that they order things relating to " the whole, as what properly belong to them: and that they " exerciſe a guardianſhip over the human race, and are ſome- " times curious about individuals.—Scire illos eſſe qui præſident " mundo: qui univerſa, ut ſua, temperant: qui humani generis " tutelam gerunt: interdùm curioſi ſingulorum." He ſeems here to think, that Providence ſeldom concerneth itſelf about individuals, or particular perſons and things: eſpecially thoſe of ſmaller conſequence. And if this were the caſe, the far greater part of mankind could not be ſure, that they and their concernments are under the care and inſpection of Divine Providence: which would leave little room for a religious fear of God, and for the exerciſe of a due ſubmiſſion, reſignation, and affiance.

The notions which many of the philoſophers entertained of Fate, did alſo contribute to encumber and perplex their doctrine of Divine Providence. It is mentioned as one of Thales's ſayings, that neceſſity is the ſtrongeſt of all things; for all things are ſubject to it. Parmenides and Democritus held, as Plutarch informs us, that all things came by neceſſity: and Democritus underſtood this of an abſolute material neceſſity. Heraclitus was of opinion that all things are done by fate, and that fate is the ſame with neceſſity (*g*). The Stoics eſpecially talked much of fate. Zeno taught that all things are ſubject to fate, as we are informed by Laertius. But the accounts given of fate by Zeno, Chryſippus, and the moſt eminent of the antient Stoics, are very obſcure

(*g*) Plutarch. de Placit. Phil. lib. i. cap. 25, 26, 27. Oper. tom. II. p. 884.

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and confuſed. They held that in the conſtitution of the world Jupiter himſelf was hampered by natural neceſſity, and the inobſequiouſneſs of matter: ſo that he could not always do the things that he would. To this they aſcribed it that ſome men are unavoidably of bad and perverſe diſpoſitions, and that good men are neceſſarily expoſed to eternal evils and calamities. Plutarch ſays, that neceſſity was, according to the Stoics, a violent and invincible or immovable cauſe; and fate an orderly eſtabliſhed complexion or concatenation of cauſes (*h*). And yet they endeavoured ſo to explain it, as to leave ſome room for human liberty. But it muſt be acknowledged, that the later philoſophers, after Chriſtianity had made ſome progreſs in the world, particularly Hierocles and Simplicius, expreſſed themſelves much more clearly and conſiſtently on this ſubject.

The confuſion and uncertainty which the philoſophers were under farther appears, in that they ſeemed to divide the ordering of events between God or Providence, Fate and Fortune. Plato himſelf, according to Plutarch, referred ſome things to Providence, ſome things to neceſſity (*i*). And in his fourth book of Laws, he ſaith, that "God, and with God, Fortune and Opportunity, govern all "the affairs of men (*k*)." Maximus Tyrius ſuppoſes that all things which happen to men are either inſpected and ordered by Providence, or neceſſitated by Fate, or varied by Fortune, or managed

(*h*) Plutarch. de Placit. Phil. lib. i. cap. 27. p. 885.

(*i*) Ibid. cap. 26. p. 884.

(*k*) Plat. de Leg. lib. iv. p. 598. Oper. Lugd. 1590.

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by human art and ſkill. He compares Fate to a rigid tyrant, which neither acknowledgeth a ſuperior, nor can be changed: that it draws us by force, and we muſt obey: that it is inexorable, and prayers to it are in vain: and that even Jupiter himſelf has no way of averting it. And accordingly he produces the paſſage of Homer, where Jupiter is introduced as complaining, that the Fates had determined that his dear ſon Sarpedon ſhould be ſlain by Patroclus, and that therefore it was not in his power to ſave him. As to Fortune that philoſopher repreſents it as a potentate that has no underſtanding, ἀνοήτος δυνάστης, not guided by counſel, judgment, or Providence, but by fury, paſſion, and impetuous arbitrary will: that it is without reaſon, without foreſight, deaf and inconſtant, driven hither and thither, and not to be managed by any art or ſkill of a governor (*l*). And he had obſerved before, in the ſame diſſertation, that riches, and what are uſually called the goods of Fortune, are not given by the gods, but are the mad gifts of mad Fortune; and he compares them to the gifts we receive from perſons that are drunk (*m*).

It is manifeſt from the account which hath been given, that there was great confuſion and uncertainty in the notions of the antient Pagans, both the vulgar and the philoſophers, with regard to Divine Providence: it muſt therefore be the higheſt ſatisfaction and advantage to have an expreſs revelation from God to guide and inſtruct us in a matter of ſuch vaſt importance. And this is

(*l*) Max. Tyr. diſſert. 30. p. 360. 362. et. ſeq. Edit. Oxon. 1677.

(*m*) Ibid. p. 357.

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our ineſtimable privilege, who have the benefit of the Revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures. We are there aſſured in the name of God himſelf, that though he is infinitely above all human comprehenſion, and though it be a wonderful condeſcenſion in him to regard the ſervices of the moſt excellent of created beings, yet his providential care extendeth to all the creatures he hath made, and particularly to mankind: and not only to nations and large communities, but to the individuals of the human race, the meaneſt not excepted: that nothing befalleth us by a blind unguided chance, or an equally blind fatal neceſſity: that even thoſe events which ſeem to us to be fortuitous are under the ſuperintendency of God's moſt wiſe Providence, and nothing, whether good or evil, happeneth to us without his direction or permiſſion; but that this is ſo ordered as to leave room for the exerciſe of human liberty and moral agency, and for the operation of ſecond cauſes and inſtruments: that there are orders of glorious beings ſuperior to man, whom God is pleaſed to make uſe of in the adminiſtrations of his Providence towards the human race, but that things are not left abſolutely to their direction and diſpoſal: they are fellow-ſervants with us of the ſame ſupreme univerſal Lord; nor is any part of that religious homage or adoration to be rendered to them which is due to him alone: that there are evil ſpirits, of great power as well as malice; but that they can do no more than God permits, and are under the ſovereign controul of his Providence; ſo that good men need not be afraid of them, whilſt they put their truſt in God, and go on in the way of their duty: that God is juſt and good in all his diſpenſations, and always proceeds upon the wiſeſt reaſons, though we may not be

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able at preſent to apprehend thoſe reaſons: that to his goodneſs we owe all the advantages and accommodations of this preſent life; and that all the afflictions which befal us are permitted and ordered by him for wiſe and righteous ends; and that he will cauſe them to work together for good to them that love and ſerve him in ſincerity. We are there farther aſſured, that God is ever ready to grant to good men the influences and aids of his Holy Spirit, to aſſiſt them in the performance of their duty, and to ſupport and comfort them in all their tribulation: and finally, that he exerciſeth a conſtant inſpection over all men, and knoweth all their words and actions, and even the moſt ſecret thoughts and diſpoſitions of their hearts, and that to him they muſt be accountable for them, and ſhall by him be rewarded or puniſhed accordingly. This is the general idea which the Scripture giveth us of God's providential adminiſtration, than which nothing can be more noble, or more uſeful, where it is ſtedfaſtly believed. And it is of the higheſt advantage to have all this not merely propoſed to us as the opinions of wiſe men and philoſophers, contradicted by others of great name, but aſcertained by an expreſs Revelation from God himſelf. This certainly layeth a ſolid foundation for a religious awe and veneration of the Divine Majeſty, for yielding a dutiful obedience to his laws, for an intire ſubmiſſion and reſignation to his will, and a calm acquieſcence in the orders of his Providence, for a thankful ſenſe of his goodneſs in the bleſſings we enjoy, and a ſteady patience and fortitude of mind under all the afflictions and adverſities we may meet with in this preſent ſtate, and for our acting continually as in his ſight, and maintaining an habitual regard to him in our whole courſe.

On this occaſion it may not be improper to ſay ſomething about the duty of prayer, the right exerciſe of which hath a manifeſt dependence on the doctrine and belief of Divine Providence. This hath very generally obtained, wherever there has been an appearance of religion; and it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have made a part of the primitive religion derived from the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race. Whilſt this religion continued in a conſiderable degree uncorrupted, prayers, as well as the other acts of divine worſhip, were directed to the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the world. But as idolatry made a progreſs, their religious worſhip, and particularly this part of it, was addreſſed to a multiplicity of deities. To theſe they offered up their prayers and ſupplications, looking upon them as the diſpenſers of worldly bleſſings, or the inflicters of evils and calamities: whilſt the ſupreme univerſal Lord was in a great meaſure neglected, even by thoſe who had ſome notion of the one Supreme Deity, becauſe they ſuppoſed him too far above them, to concern himſelf with their affairs. Hence it came to paſs, that though prayer was almoſt univerſally in uſe among the Pagan nations, they were wrong in the object of their prayers, and generally in the matter of them too. They ſeem for the moſt part to have had no notion of praying to the gods for any thing but goods of a worldly nature, riches, honours, long life, health, proſperity and ſucceſs in their undertakings, and other things of a like kind. Some of their wiſeſt men ſaw the impropriety of this, and at the ſame time they were ſo ſenſible of their own inability to judge what to pray for as they ought, that they thought it beſt only to pray for good things in general, and not to preſume to deſcend to

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particular requeſts. This is the deſign of Socrates in the ſecond Alcibiad; in which he repreſents to that young nobleman, that it was not ſafe for him to pray for any thing in particular, leſt the thing he prayed for ſhould prove a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing; and therefore adviſes him to wait till ſome god ſhould enlighten him in the knowledge of good and evil. Pythagoras, as Laertius informs us (*n*), permited not that any man ſhould pray for himſelf, becauſe no man knoweth what is good for him. Max. Tyrius has a whole Diſſertation to prove, that we ought not to pray at all. And others of the philoſophers were probably of the ſame opinion (*o*). Some of them indeed, and particularly Epictetus and Antoninus, had juſter notions, both of the obligations of the duty of prayer, and of what ſhould be the propereſt matter for our prayers: but as to the objects of prayer, they took no care to rectify the popular polytheiſtical notions, but rather countenanced them. But if the philoſophers had been never ſo right, or ſo unanimous in their opinions and directions as to the duty of prayer, it muſt have had but ſmall influence on the generality of

(*n*) Laert. lib. viii. ſegm. 9.

(*o*) Our modern deiſts, who profeſs to govern themſelves by the law of nature, are divided in their ſentiments about prayer. Some think it to be a duty of natural religion, others will not allow it to be ſo. Mr. Chubb is of opinion, that there is an impropriety in praying to God, and intimates his ſuſpicion that it is diſpleaſing to the Deity. See his Poſthumous Works, Vol. I. p. 283. et ſeq. Blount in his notes on Philoſtratus's Life of Apollonius Tyanæus, p. 38. having obſerved that ſome of the Heathens uſed no prayers at all, inſinuates in their names ſeveral objections againſt that duty. Lord Bolingbroke ſeems ſometimes to make it a duty of the law of nature, but is for confining it to the heart, and not for making uſe of outward expreſſions in prayer. The reader may ſee the arguments of Maximus Tyrius and others againſt the duty of prayer well anſwered in Dr. Benſon's tract on the End and Deſign of Prayer.

mankind, in compariſon of that which ariſeth from the authority of an expreſs and well-atteſted Revelation from God, injoining it as our duty to pray to God, and encouraging us to it by gracious declarations and promiſes. Such a Revelation we have communicated to us in the Holy Scriptures. We have the ſatisfaction of being there aſſured, that though God be highly exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe, yet he alloweth and requireth us to offer up our praiſes and thankſgivings to his Divine Majeſty for the benefits we receive from him, and our prayers and ſupplications for obtaining the good things we ſtand in need of, and for averting the evils we have reaſon to fear; not as if he did not know our wants without our expreſſing them, but becauſe it is his will that we ſhould maintain a conſtant ſenſe of our abſolute dependence upon God, and exerciſe a dutiful reſignation and affiance, and all thoſe pious affections which become reaſonable creatures towards the Supreme Being. We are allowed to come to him as on a throne of Grace, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, the great and only Mediator of his own appointment, with a filial freedom as children to a Father both able and ready to help us; to apply to him even for the good things relating to the body and this preſent world; provided we aſk them, not abſolutely, but in an entire reſignation to his will, and ſo far only as he ſeeth them to be really fit and needful for us: But eſpecially to apply to him for bleſſings of a ſpiritual nature, and for his gracious aſſiſtances to ſupport and animate us in the performance of our duty. In the Holy Scriptures we have the moſt excellent patterns of prayer, and the beſt directions for the right performance of it, and are taught both by precept and example what to pray for, and how to pray. But at the ſame

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time great care is taken to inform us, that our prayers will be of no avail to our acceptance with God, if ſeparated from a holy and virtuous practice; that the prayer of the wicked man perſiſting in his wickedneſs is an abomination unto the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

General reflections on the foregoing account of the religion of the antient Pagans. The firſt reflection is this: that the repreſentations made to us in Scripture of the deplorable ſtate of religion among the Gentiles are literally true, and agreeable to fact, and are confirmed by the undoubted monuments of Paganiſm. The attempts of ſome learned men to explain away thoſe repreſentations conſidered, and ſhewn to be vain and inſufficient.

I SHALL conclude the account that has been given of the ſtate of religion in the Gentile world with ſome general reflections and obſervations.

It plainly appears, that even the moſt learned and civilized Heathen nations were ſunk into a deplorable ſtate of darkneſs and corruption. They were fallen from the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God into the moſt amazing idolatry and polytheiſm. The names, the characters, and attributes of God were miſapplied to a multiplicity of idol deities. Inſtead of being led by the works of God to acknowledge and adore him the glorious author, they for the moſt part worſhipped the works themſelves, and paid that adoration to them which was due tohim alone. Temples were every where built, altars erected, prayers and ſacrifices offered to falſe and fictitious deities, to many of whom the popular theology attributed ſome of the worſt vices and paſſions of frail

frail mortals. They even worſhipped evil dæmons, acknowledged by themſelves to be ſuch; and many of their religious rites, inſtituted by the command of their oracles, were ſo cruel, ſo obſcene and impure, as were only ſuited to evil and vicious beings. Many of their philoſophers themſelves either maintained tenets which tended to atheiſm, and to ſubvert the foundations of all religion; or, they endeavoured to deſtroy all certainty and evidence, and to introduce an univerſal doubt and ſcepticiſm, whereby they left men no principles to depend upon, even with regard to the belief of a God and a Providence. And as to thoſe of the philoſophers who entertained juſter and nobler ſentiments of religion, and the Deity, their ſublime ſpeculations, which we are ſo apt to admire, were mixed with very dangerous errors, and at beſt were of ſmall advantage to the people, and confined in a great meaſure to their ſchools. To which it muſt be added, that in their own practice they univerſally fell in with the common idolatry and polytheiſm, and inſtead of reclaiming the people from it, countenanced it by their maxims, and deviſed plauſible colours to defend it.

The truth of this account has been ſhewn at large from the Heathen writers themſelves, and is confirmed by all the remaining monuments of Paganiſm. And this fully juſtifies the repreſentation that is made to us in the Holy Scriptures of the ſtate of religion in the Heathen world, eſpecially at the time when the Chriſtian revelation was firſt publiſhed. St. Paul in the firſt chapter of his epiſtle to the Romans deſcribes the Heathens in general, thoſe eſpecially of the Roman empire, which was then the moſt learned and civilized part of the world, as having arrived to the

moſt monſtrous degree of idolatry and corruption of manners: that notwithſtanding the diſcoveries made of the divine nature and perfections in the works of creation, which left them " without " excuſe," they " did not glorify God as God, but became vain " in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkened. " Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe they became fools: and changed " the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to " corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and " creeping things." And that " they changed the truth of God " into a lie, and worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than " the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever:" that as " they did not " like to retain God in their knowledge," ſo he gave " them " up to a reprobate mind," ſo that they abandoned themſelves to the moſt unnatural impurities, and to all kinds of abominable vice and wickedneſs. See Rom. i. 17. to the end of that chapter. St. Paul in his other epiſtles ſpeaks in the ſame ſtrain. Thus in his firſt to the Theſſalonians he ſaith of the Gentiles, that " they " knew not God," 1 Theſſ. iv. 5. And he deſcribes their converſion to Chriſtianity thus, that they " turned from idols to " ſerve the living and true God;" where he ſuppoſes that whilſt they continued in their Gentile ſtate, they ſerved idols, and did not ſerve the living and true God, 1 Theſſ. i. 9. To the Galatians who had been Gentiles, he ſaith, " then when ye knew not " God, ye did ſervice unto them which by nature are no gods." Gal. iv. 11. And in like manner in his epiſtle to the Epheſians he bids them remember that they " were in time paſt Gentiles " in the fleſh:" and that at that time they " had no hope, and " were without God in the world," Eph. ii. 11, 12. ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ;

κόσμῳ; not as if they had no notion at all of a Deity, and did not believe the exiſtence of God, but it is a ſtrong manner of expreſſion to ſignify that they were without the right knowledge and worſhip of the only true God, and paid their religious ſervice not to the true God, but to idol deities. And in the fourth chapter of that epiſtle, verſe 17. 18. he gives it as the character of the Gentiles in general, that they had the "underſtanding darkened," being alienated "from the life of God, through the ignorance "that was in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts." The ſame apoſtle tells the Corinthians that "the things which "the Gentiles ſacrificed, they ſacrificed to devils, and not to God;" and, ſays he, "I would not that ye ſhould have fellowſhip with "devils." 1 Cor. x. 20. If the word δαιμονίοις be rendered not *devils*, as it is by our tranſlators, but *dæmons*, as ſome chuſe to render it, it makes no great difference. It is certain that the word δαιμόνιον is generally taken in a bad ſenſe in Scripture (*p*); and which way ſoever we render the word, it is plain that the apoſtle here oppoſeth the worſhip of theſe dæmons to the worſhip of the one true God, and ſuppoſeth that it was inconſiſtent with it, and that the one of theſe could not be ſafely joined with the other. In the ſeveral paſſages which have been produced, it is evident that the apoſtle ſpeaks of the Heathens in general. What particular perſons there might be among them, who kept themſelves free from the prevailing corruption and idolatry, it is to little purpoſe to

(*p*) The learned Dr. Cudworth obſerves, that in the New Teſtament, according to the judgment of Origen, Euſebius, and others of the antient fathers, both theſe words δαίμων; and δαιμόνια, are alike taken always in a worſe ſenſe for evil and impure ſpirits only. Intel. Syſt. p. 264.

enquire. But it has been ſhewn that their greateſt and wiſeſt men fell in with it. When the apoſtle puts the ſuppoſition concerning "the uncircumciſion" or uncircumciſed Gentiles "keeping the righteouſneſs of the law, or fulfilling the law," Rom. ii. 26, 27. this ſeems plainly to be underſtood of ſuch Gentiles as Cornelius was, who, though uncircumciſed, and not of the commonwealth of Iſrael, was a devout adorer of the only true God, and of him only. And indeed no man that was not ſo could be ſaid to keep the law, or to fulfil it, of which this was a principal and fundamental article. And it is evidently of ſuch perſons as Cornelius that St. Peter ſpeaks, when he declares "of a truth "I perceive that God is no reſpecter of perſons: but in every "nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, is ac-"cepted with him." Acts x. 34, 35. And it may be juſtly concluded, that Cornelius learned the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God by converſing with the Jews. Acts x. 22. And probably this was the caſe of many other Gentiles at that time. But nothing can be concluded from this as to the general ſtate of the Heathen world with regard to religion.

I am ſenſible, that ſome learned perſons, and particularly the eminent Dr. Cudworth, have endeavoured to bring in St. Paul himſelf as a voucher, that the Heathens in general, not only the philoſophers, but the vulgar, knew and worſhipped the one true God. And this they attempt to prove from that apoſtle's diſcourſe to the Athenians. What our tranſlators render, "I perceive "that in all things ye are too ſuperſtitious," the doctor renders "thus, I perceive that in every thing ye are more than ordinarily "religious."

" religious." And he thinks the word δεισιδαιμονεστέρους is to be taken there in a good ſenſe, from St. Paul's ſaying, " the God " whom you ignorantly worſhip, declare I unto you:" and afterwards mentioning the God that made the world and all things in it, the doctor infers two things: " Firſt, that by the unknown God " of the Athenians was meant the only true God, he who made " the world and all things in it, who in all probability was there- " fore ſtiled by them ἀγνώστος θεὸς, becauſe he is not only invi- " ſible, but incomprehenſible by mortals." The ſecond thing, which, he ſays, may be concluded from hence is, that " the Athenian Pagans did εὐσεβεῖν, religiouſly worſhip the true God, " the Lord of heaven and earth." And having taken notice of the paſſage which St. Paul cites from Aratus concerning Ζεὺς or Jupiter, that " we are his offspring," he ſays, that " we have here a plain Scripture acknowledgment, that by the Ζεὺς of " the Greekiſh Pagans was ſometimes at leaſt meant the true " God (*q*)." It may be obſerved, that this learned writer expreſſes himſelf here with ſome caution and reſerve: and if he had carried it no farther than to ſay, that by the word Ζεὺς or Jupiter among the Pagans was ſometimes meant the true God, and that ſome perſons among them might make uſe of that name to ſignify the one Supreme God, I ſhould not have much conteſted it with him. But the point the doctor ſhould have proved is, that he whom the generality of the vulgar Pagans worſhipped under the name of Jupiter was the only true God, and not an idol deity. And it would be a ſtrange thing if he could produce a Scripture acknow-

(*q*) Intel. Syſt. p. 473, 474, 475.

ledgment for this: yet this is what he afterwards attempts. "It "is evident, ſaith he, that by Aratus's Ζεὺς, or Jupiter, was really "meant the Supreme God, the Maker of the whole world: "which, confirmed alſo by St. Paul and the Scripture, ought to "be a matter out of controverſy among us. Neither is it reaſon-"able to think, that Aratus was ſingular in this; but that he "ſpoke according to the received theology of the Greeks, and "that not only amongſt philoſophers and learned men, but even "the vulgar alſo. And ſince the Latins had the very ſame "notion of Jupiter that the Greeks had of Ζεὺς, it cannot be "denied, but that they commonly by their Jupiter alſo under-"ſtood the one Supreme God, the Lord of heaven and earth." Thus, according to this very learned writer, the received theology of the Pagans, both amongſt the Philoſophers and the vulgar, was this, that by the Jupiter they adored they commonly underſtood the one true Supreme God, the Maker of the world, and Lord of heaven and earth. And this he aſſerts is ſo evident that it cannot be denied. I have a great reſpect for this excellent author; but if he had expreſſed himſelf more cautiouſly and modeſtly on this head, it would have been better. He ſeems here to have been carried away by his charitable prejudices in favour of the antient Pagans. And I heartily wiſh there was good reaſon to believe, that the account he gives of them and their religion is a juſt and true one. But the contrary may be plainly proved from the Pagan writers themſelves, and from ſeveral paſſages in his own learned work. We are not to judge of the Pagan religion, and the popular received theology, by ſome detached paſſages of particular writers, but by the general ſcheme of their religious

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eſtabliſhments; by which it appears, that Jupiter was really no more than the chief of the Pagan idol deities, of the ſame kind, though ſomewhat ſuperior to the reſt. I think however, that whatever his own charity might incline him to ſuppoſe, he ſhould not have put this upon us as confirmed by Scripture authority. He does not merely ſay, there might be ſome few among the Pagans who knew and worſhipped the one true Supreme God: but he makes this to have been the common notion and practice of the Heathens in general, and that under the name of a Jupiter they directed their worſhip to the one true God, the ſame whom we adore. I need not take pains to prove that this is not the idea given us of the Heathens in the Old Teſtament (*r*). And as to the New, though Dr. Cudworth has endeavoured to avail himſelf of St. Paul's authority, whoſoever carefully examines the paſſages above produced from this great apoſtle, will be apt to think that it is ſcarce poſſible to reconcile the account he gives of the general ſtate of the Heathen world with the Doctor's hypotheſis. Indeed what this learned man relies upon is not any expreſs Scripture declaration, that the Gentiles in general knew and worſhipped the one true God, and that this was the Jupiter they adored; but inferences of his own from ſome particular expreſſions of St. Paul, interpreted after his own way, in oppoſition to frequent and expreſs declarations of that apoſtle. Thus, according to this learned

(*r*) Many paſſages might be mentioned to this purpoſe. But I ſhall only take notice of one. The "Heathens," and "thoſe that know not God and call not on his "name," are uſed as ſynonymous expreſſions. Jer. x. 25. Pſal. lxxix. 6. But I do not ſee how this could be truly applied to them, if the one true God was the chief object of their devotions, to whom they principally paid their worſhip, and offered up their prayers.

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writer, the Athenians are repreſented by St. Paul as "more than "ordinarily religious," who devoutly worſhipped the one true God, the Maker and Lord of heaven and earth. And if this was true concerning the Athenians, it might be juſtly ſaid of the Heathens in general, ſince it admits of a clear proof, that none of the Gentiles were more deeply immerſed in the common idolatry and ſuperſtition than they were. Accordingly the Doctor ſuppoſes the ſame thing concerning the Heathens in general, that the one true God was the Ζεὺς or Jupiter they commonly adored, not the philoſophers only, but the vulgar, both among the Greeks and Romans; and he would have us think that St. Paul ſuppoſed it too.

It is ſcarce worth while to conteſt it, whether the words with which the apoſtle introduces his diſcourſe to the Athenians had better be tranſlated "ſuperſtitious" or "religious." If the word uſed in the original be ſometimes taken in a good ſenſe, it cannot be denied that it is often in the Pagan writers themſelves uſed to ſignify an exceſſive ſuperſtition. And it may be looked upon as an inſtance of St. Paul's prudence, that he choſe a word which was very proper to ſignify that ſuperſtition to which they were ſo immoderately addicted, and at the ſame time was capable of a ſofter ſenſe, that he might not too much irritate them in the beginning of his diſcourſe. But it ſeems to me a ſtrange ſuppoſition to imagine that St. Paul intended to commend the Athenians as being "in every thing more than ordinarily religious," in the proper and laudable ſenſe of the word; as if they were in his opinion to an uncommon degree devout adorers of the only true God,

God, the Maker of heaven and earth. The contrary appears from the whole ſtrain of his diſcourſe, as well as from what the ſacred hiſtorian had obſerved juſt before, viz. that while Paul waited at Athens, " his ſpirit was ſtirred within him, when he " ſaw the city," κατειδωλον—full of idols, or as it is well rendered, " wholly given to idolatry." Can there be a plainer proof, that they were not more than ordinarily religious in the good ſenſe of the word, but groſly and extravagantly idolatrous and ſuperſtitious? And this was indeed their true character. Pauſanias obſerves, that they worſhipped the gods more than others, and exceeded all others in their diligence, " εἰς τὰ θεία," towards the gods, or in things relating to the gods (*s*). And Xenophon in his account of the Athenian republic ſays, they had twice as many feſtivals as any other cities. And what kind of feſtivals they were the reader may find by conſulting Potter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. i. from whence it appears, that they were for the moſt part founded on the poetical fables of the gods. So addicted were the Athenians to ſuperſtition, that they were ready to adopt the gods of other countries, and worſhipped them as well as their own. Strabo obſerves, that they received many foreign ſacra or religious rites, " πόλλα τῶν ξενικῶν ἱερῶν παρεδέξαν," inſomuch that they were ridiculed for it by their own comic writers (*t*). If therefore the apoſtle be ſuppoſed here to tell them, that they were in every thing more than ordinarily religious, the meaning can only be, that they were uncommonly diligent in what they took

(*s*) Pauſan. Attic. cap. 17.

(*t*) Strabo, lib. x. p. 722. Amſtel.

to be religion: which they might be, and yet be ſtrangers to true religion, and addicted to a falſe one. And accordingly he begins his diſcourſe with ſaying, that as he "paſſed by, and beheld their "devotions, τὰ σεβάσματα," which may ſignify either their ſacred rites, or the objects of their worſhip, he "found an altar with this "inſcription, To the unknown God:" i. e. to a God whom, by their own acknowledgment, they did not know. The whole inſcription, according to Oecumenius, ran thus. "To the Gods of "Aſia, Europe, and Libya or Africa, to the unknown and ſtrange "God.—θεῷ ἀγνώστῳ καὶ ξένῳ." And it appears from Pauſanias, that there were ſeveral altars at Athens to unknown gods. The ſame thing is teſtified by Philoſtratus. So ſuperſtitious were they, that they were afraid of omitting or neglecting to pay their worſhip to any deity known or unknown (*u*). I am ſenſible that Dr. Cudworth gives a different ſenſe to the word "unknown God," from what I have here ſuppoſed. He thinks, all that the Athenians meant by it was, that God was "inviſible" and "incom-"prehenſible." There might be ſome pretence for this, if they had confined this title to one God only; but, as hath been already hinted, they had altars erected to the unknown gods. And

(*u*) There were not only at Athens, but in many other parts of the Heathen world, altars erected and ſacrifices offered to unknown deities; that they might take in all the gods, both thoſe whoſe names they knew, and thoſe whom they were ignorant of, or concerning whom they were uncertain who they were. St. Auſtin informs us, that Varro writ a book concerning the "Dii certi," and another concerning the "Dii incerti." De Civ. Dei. lib. vi. cap. 3. et lib. 7. cap. 17. A learned author has collected many teſtimonies to ſhew that there were altars to the unknown God or gods among many nations, the Græcians, Arcadians, Lydians, Celtiberians, Arabians, the people of Marſeilles, &c. See "The Knowledge of "divine Things from Revelation only, not from Reaſon or Nature," p. 242. et ſeq.

certain it is, that this was not the ſenſe in which St. Paul took it: for in that ſenſe he was an unknown God to St. Paul as well as to the Athenians. He will always be to Chriſtians as well as to Heathens inviſible and incomprehenſible, not to be ſeen by the bodily eye, nor fully comprehended by the mind. But St. Paul plainly ſignifies, that he knew him, though the Athenians did not, and therefore he came to inſtruct them in the knowledge of that God whom they did not know before. "The God whom "you ignorantly worſhip," or as the words might properly be rendered, "the God whom being ignorant of, ὃν ἀγνοοῦντες, you "worſhip, him declare I unto you (*x*)." As if he had ſaid, You have built an altar to a God, who, you confeſs, is unknown to you. But I know him, and am now ready, if you will attend to me, to publiſh and declare him to you. The God whom you do not know, and whom I come to declare, is the only true God, who made the world and all things that are therein, and is the only ſovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

According to Dr. Cudworth's way of repreſenting it, St. Paul, by citing what Aratus ſays of Jupiter, intended to ſignify to the Athenians, that the god to whom they erected an altar as to an unknown deity, was that very Jupiter whom they all acknowledged as the chief of the deities they adored. But certainly they would never have characterized their Jupiter as an unknown and

(*x*) The word here is καταγγέλλω which properly ſignifies to publiſh things to thoſe that did not know them before. It is the word made uſe of to ſignify the publiſhing the goſpel to the Jews and Gentiles who before were ignorant of it.

ſtrange or foreign god: nor would the apoſtle have repreſented him to them under that notion. It ſeems plain from the whole of his diſcourſe, that he here ſuppoſeth concerning the Athenians what he elſewhere ſaith of the Gentiles in general, that "they "knew not" (the one true) "God." The moſt natural interpretation therefore ſeems to be this, that the apoſtle according to his accuſtomed zeal and prudence takes advantage from their having erected an altar to the ſtrange and unknown god, which was really an effect of their ſuperſtition, to declare to them the one true God whom they were ignorant of before, and to raiſe their thoughts and views to the great Creator and Lord of the univerſe, as the only proper object of their adoration. With the ſame view he cites a paſſage from one of their own poets Aratus (*y*), to ſhew that

(*y*) The ſcholiaſt upon Aratus ſuppoſes that he ſpeaks of the Ζεὺς φύσιος, the Jupiter Phyſicus, or the air. Dr. Cudworth finds fault with this, and I think very juſtly, if the air be underſtood merely as an inanimate thing. But it is not improbable that Aratus might mean the æther in the Pythagorean ſenſe, which they held to be animated, and to be the cauſe of the formation and order of things, and to be univerſally diffuſed, of which they ſuppoſed the ſouls of men to be particles: or, which comes pretty much to the ſame thing, he might mean the ſoul of the world in the Stoical ſenſe. Nor is there any thing in that whole paſſage of Aratus, a part of which is cited by the apoſtle, but might be ſaid agreeably to the Pythagorean and Stoical notions. But St. Paul was not concerned to enquire what were Aratus's particular ſentiments concerning the Deity: it was enough for his purpoſe, that what the poet ſaid was applicable to the one true God, however he intended it: or, if we ſhould ſuppoſe Aratus himſelf to have intended by Jupiter to ſignify the one true Supreme God, this would be far from proving that the Jupiter, whom the Athenians and the Heathens in general adored, was the one true God: though the apoſtle might juſtly and prudently take advantage from it to lead the Athenians from their idolatry. There is a remarkable paſſage of Sophocles, cited by Juſtin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clemens Alexandrinus, and others of the fathers, though it is not to be found in any of his works now extant. The purport of it is this: "There is in truth one, there is one God, who formed the heaven, and the ſpa-

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that what the poet had ſaid of Jupiter properly belonged to that only true God whom he came to declare to them, and to whom he taught them to offer up a pure and ſpiritual worſhip. I have obſerved before, that it was no unuſual thing among the Pagans to apply to their Jupiter, and the other deities they adored, the attributes and works, which are proper to the one true Supreme God. And the apoſtle's deſign in citing this paſſage of the poet, was not to perſuade the Athenians that the Jupiter whom they

" dious earth, and the blue ſwelling ſea, and the boiſterous winds *." And then he goes on to blame the folly of mortals, " who, erring in their hearts, have for a " conſolation to them in their calamities, ſet up images of the gods, made of " wood, or ſtone, or gold, or ivory, and when they have offered ſacrifices to them, " and celebrated feſtivals to their honour, think they have acted piouſly." If we ſuppoſe theſe verſes to be genuine, and that St. Paul had quoted them in his diſcourſe to the Athenians, which on that ſuppoſition he might have done, could it be ſaid, as it is by Dr. Cudworth with reſpect to Aratus, that " it is not rea- " ſonable to think that Sophocles was ſingular in this, but that he ſpake according " to the received theology of the Greeks, and that not only among the philoſo- " phers and learned men, but even the vulgar alſo?" The contrary is evident: for what is here ſaid is manifeſtly oppoſed to the received theology, and to the religion and worſhip then in uſe among the Athenians and other Greeks, and to which they were ſtrongly addicted. Whence Sophocles had this knowledge, or how he came by it, we cannot pretend to determine. There were rays of light ſcattered here and there among the Pagans, which ſometimes broke forth in bright flaſhes. It may well be ſuppoſed, that he, and ſome others of the Greeks, might have ſome acquaintance with the doctrine of the Jews, whoſe religion had made a progreſs in the Leſſer Aſia, with which Greece was nearly connected. But which way ſoever we ſuppoſe him to have come by it, he ſeems to carry it farther, if theſe verſes may be depended upon, than even Socrates or Plato himſelf; neither of whom ventured to paſs a cenſure, as Sophocles ſeems here to do, upon the way of worſhipping the gods by images, ſacrifices, and feſtivals to their honour, but rather expreſſed their approbation of them.

* Εἰς παῖς ἀκόλαστον δὲ γῆν βλὰς
Ὅς ἀφρὸν τ' ἔτυξε καὶ γαῖαν μαλερὸν
Πόντου τε χειμῶνι θλιβὲ, καὶ ἀνέμων βίαι.

ordinarily worſhipped was the true God, but that the God he came to declare to them was the true Supreme God, to whom alone thoſe characters and epithets really belonged, which were wrongly applied to the Pagan Jupiter.

It confirms the ſenſe we have given of St. Paul's diſcourſe, that he here calls the paſt times of Heatheniſm "the times of their "ignorance." Ver. 30. And in ver. 27. he ſpeaks of their "ſeeking the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find "him." Where he ſeems to compare them to perſons groping in the dark, or to blind men who ſeek their way by feeling with their hands. So Polybius, as cited by Scapula, uſes the word "ψηλαφίω," which we properly render to "feel after him." And Grotius's note upon it is this. "Oſtendit hæc phraſis rei "difficultatem. Nam palpare aut cæcorum eſt, aut noctu in-"cedentium."

It may help to illuſtrate this, that St. Paul in his ſpeech to the Lycaonians, who would have worſhipped him and Barnabas as Jupiter and Mercurius, exhorts them "to turn from theſe "vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, "the ſea, and all things that are therein;" and who had "not "left himſelf without witneſs, in that he did good, and gave rain "from heaven and fruitful ſeaſons, filling men's hearts with "food and gladneſs." Act. xiv. 15, 16, 17. Where he calls the gods the Heathens worſhipped, particularly Jupiter and Mercury, "vanities," and plainly intimates, that they did not worſhip the true God who created all things by his power, and governeth

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all things by his Providence. The Jupiter, whoſe prieſt would have offered ſacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, was undoubtedly the popular Jupiter of the Pagans. And it is evident, the apoſtle was far from ſuppoſing, what ſome have pretended, that Jupiter and the other Heathen deities were only different names of the one true God; and that the worſhip which was rendered to them was really and intentionally offered to the one Supreme Being, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. It has been already obſerved, that this apoſtle declares, that "the things "which the Gentiles ſacrificed they ſacrificed to devils or dæ-"mons, and not to God." 1 Cor. x. 20. where he plainly oppoſes the true God to the popular Pagan deities, which were the objects of public worſhip. But how could he ſay this conſiſtently with truth, if the Jupiter to which they principally offered up their ſacrifices was really the one true Supreme God; and Apollo, Bacchus, and the other Pagan divinities, were only ſo many different appellations given to the Maker and Lord of the univerſe?

The laſt thing I ſhall obſerve here, as urged by thoſe learned writers who give the moſt favourable account of the ſtate of religion in the Pagan world, relates to the paſſages produced from Heathen authors to ſhew that all nations throughout the world acknowledged and worſhipped the one Supreme God, the ſovereign Lord and Governor of the univerſe. That an obſcure notion of one Supreme Being obtained among many of the Heathen nations, even among thoſe that were accounted the moſt barbarous, who had it from antient tradition, has been ſhewn in the

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ſecond chapter of this work. But it has alſo been ſhewn that ſome of them did not render any worſhip to him whom they regarded as Supreme, from a notion that he was too far above them, and that he did not concern himſelf with them or their affairs, and therefore they paid their worſhip wholly to inferior deities. Others by the Supreme God underſtood the ſun, or confounded him with the principal of their hero divinities. And many there were who ſuppoſed the dominion and government of things to be divided among a plurality of gods whom they regarded as ſupreme in their ſeveral diſtricts: or if any of them was eſteemed to be ſuperior in power and dignity to the reſt, yet ſtill he was ſuppoſed to be of the ſame kind and nature with them. It cannot therefore be juſtly ſaid, that there has been an univerſal conſent of mankind in the notion of one Supreme God, though I readily own ſuch a conſent as to the exiſtence of ſome ſuperior inviſible divine Power or Powers: and that ſcarce any nation can be mentioned which did not acknowledge ſome deity or other. And ſo far there is, and has been in all ages, a general conſent of mankind againſt the atheiſts. Accordingly Plato and Cicero, and others of the antients before our Saviour's coming, who ſpeak of an univerſal conſent of mankind concerning the Deity, make the object of that conſent to be not one Supreme God, but the gods: and the Providence they mention as generally believed and acknowledged is the Providence of the gods. Several paſſages to this purpoſe have been produced above, which I need not here repeat. But after Chriſtianity had made ſome progreſs in the world, the advocates for Paganiſm pretended that all mankind acknowledged and adored the one true Supreme God, and that there was but one univerſal

religion among all nations. There is a remarkable paſſage of Maximus Tyrius to this purpoſe which has been often quoted. I ſhall give it to the reader in Dr. Cudworth's tranſlation, which ſeems to me to be a juſt one. He aſſerts, that "if all men were "required to declare their ſenſe concerning God, one would not "ſay one thing and another another. No; not the Scythian, nor "the Greek, nor the Hyperborean.—That in other things we find "men ſpeaking very diſcordantly from one another; all men as "it were differing from all concerning honeſt and diſhoneſt, good "and evil. Nevertheleſs, adds he, in this great war, contention, "and diſcord, you may find every where throughout the world "one agreeing law and opinion, that there is one God the King "and Father of all, and many gods, the ſons of God, co-reigners "together with God: theſe things both the Greeks and Barba-"rians alike affirm, both the inhabitants of the continent and ſea-"coaſt, both the wiſe and unwiſe (z)." Here he evidently puts his own Platonic ſyſtem upon us as the univerſal ſyſtem of all mankind. But how came he to know that all nations agreed in this? We have nothing for it but his own word. He repreſents it as if there was no difference among them in their notions of the Divinity: that if they were required to declare their ſenſe of God, one would not ſay one thing and another another, but all would ſay the ſame thing; which is plainly contrary to truth and fact.

(z) Max. Tyr. diſſert. i. p. 5, 6. Oxon. 1677. The learned and ingenious Dr. Sykes, who endeavours to ſhew that the Gentiles by the mere light of nature had generally a knowledge of the unity and perfections of God, and the other main principles of natural religion, lays a great ſtreſs on this paſſage. See his Principles and Connection of natural and revealed religion, p. 364, 365.

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For if we enquire into the ideas they had of the Divinity, or of ſuperior inviſible powers, we ſhall find there was a vaſt difference among them. " Deos eſſe nemo negat," ſaith Cicero, " quales " ſint, varium eſt." And again, " Multi de diis prava ſentiunt." The authority therefore of Maximus Tyrius is of no great weight.

Dr. Cudworth alſo cites a paſſage of Plutarch, de Iſid. et Oſir. to the ſame purpoſe, which he tranſlates thus. " The gods are " not different in different nations, as if the Barbarians and Greeks, " the ſouthern and northern inhabitants of the globe, had all dif- " ferent gods. But as the ſun, and the moon, and the heaven, " and the earth, and the ſea, are common to all, though called " by ſeveral names, in ſeveral countries; ſo one reaſon ordering " theſe things, and one Providence diſpenſing all, and the inferior " ſubſerving miniſters thereof having had ſeveral names and ho- " nours beſtowed upon them by the laws of ſeveral countries, " have been every where worſhipped throughout the whole world; " and there have been alſo different ſymbols conſecrated to them, " the better to conduct and lead on mens underſtanding to divine " things: though this hath not been without danger or hazard " of caſting men upon one or other of theſe two extremes, either " ſuperſtition or atheiſm (*a*)." Here again, we have only Plutarch's bare aſſertion, repreſenting his own opinion as that of all mankind:

(*a*) Plutarch. Oper. tom. ii. p. 377. F. 378. A. Edit. Francof. The Chevalier Ramſay in his Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, vol. ii. p. 87. quoting this paſſage of Plutarch makes this reflection upon it: that " it is as unjuſt " and unreaſonable in the Chriſtian prieſts to call the Heathens polytheiſts, as it " would be in the Pagans to call the Europeans ſo, becauſe the French call him " Dieu

mankind: and in like manner we find him in the ſame treatiſe repreſenting the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good, the other evil, which he himſelf pleads for as the univerſal doctrine of the wiſe men of all nations from the moſt antient times. The paſſage now quoted from him, and indeed the whole of that treatiſe, is manifeſtly deſigned as an apology for the Pagan idolatry and ſuperſtition, under a pretence that their multiform worſhip, paid to a multiplicity of deities, was only an addreſs to the one ſupreme God under different names and ſymbols. He denies that there are different gods worſhipped in different countries, and yet he had obſerved but a little before that the Egyptians ſuppoſed their gods to be not common to all men, but peculiar to themſelves. And elſewhere he ſays that all agree that there are gods: but concerning their number, their order, their eſſence and power, there is great diſſention among them. The philoſophers differ from the poets and the legiſlators, and theſe from the philoſophers. See his Amator. Oper. tom. II. p. 763. C, D. Immediately after the paſſage above cited from him, he recommends philoſophy as neceſſary to guide men to a right underſtanding of their ſacred rites; and ſays, they ought to be taken in that ſenſe which is moſt conſiſtent with reaſon. It is plain from this, that he was reſolved, if

"Dieu, the Engliſh God, the Italians Dio, &c." This charge, if it were true, would equally hold againſt the Scriptures, which certainly repreſent the Heathens as polytheiſts, as againſt the Chriſtian Prieſts. But that there was a great deal more in the Heathen polytheiſm than this gentleman would make us believe, may be proved with the cleareſt evidence, and has been ſufficiently ſhewn in the courſe of this work. Nor is any great ſtreſs to be laid upon a few paſſages of ſome of the philoſophers, who endeavoured to put plauſible colours upon the Pagan idolatry, eſpecially after Chriſtianity had made its public appearance.

he found them not conſiſtent with reaſon, to make them appear ſo, and to put a ſenſe upon them which ſhould cover their abſurdity. And indeed he has given ſeveral ſpecimens of this way of interpretation in that work, though many of his allegorical explications are ſtrangely forced and unnatural. He ſuppoſes here that without the guidance of philoſophy the people would not rightly underſtand the ſacred rites. But it does not appear that the people conſulted the philoſophers about their deities, or the worſhip they rendered to them. They had always been accuſtomed to worſhip thoſe as ſo many different deities, whom ſome of the philoſophers repreſented as only different names of one God, and they paid little regard to thoſe philoſophical interpretations, which had no effect on the public worſhip. And indeed if they had hearkened to the philoſophers, it would not have much mended the matter; ſince it has been ſhewn that the moſt eminent of them, inſtead of reclaiming the people from their idolatry and ſuperſtition, rather encouraged them in it, and by deifying the things of nature, opened a way to the moſt groſs and extenſive idolatry. The manner in which Plutarch concludes this paſſage betrays a conſciouſneſs, that after all his attempts to give a plauſible account of the Heathen theology, there was great danger of its precipitating men either into an extravagant ſuperſtition, or into atheiſm.

I readily own that at the time when Maximus Tyrius, Plutarch, and Apuleius wrote, who all talk in the ſame ſtrain, the unity of God was far more generally known and acknowledged among the Pagan nations than before. But this was not owing to the

the reaſoning of the philoſophers, but to the light of Chriſtianity, which then became generally diffuſed; and for which the Jewiſh revelation had prepared the way. Juſtin Martyr, who lived nearly about the ſame time with thoſe philoſophers I have mentioned, declares that "there was no part of mankind, whether Greeks or "Barbarians, or by whatſoever name they are called, where praiſes "and thankſgivings were not offered to the Father and Maker of "the univerſe, in the name of a crucified Jeſus (*b*)." Suppoſing the manner of expreſſion to be hyperbolical, yet it ſhews that it was well known that Chriſtianity had then produced great effects, in ſpreading the knowledge of the true God among the nations, even among the remote and barbarous.

In the preceding ages of Paganiſm the doctrine of the unity was a ſecret only committed to a few, who did not publiſh it to the people. This appears from the teſtimonies produced even by thoſe learned authors themſelves, who want to make it paſs for the general doctrine of the Pagan world. For they either ſuppoſe it to have been taught in the myſteries which were celebrated in different nations, or to have made a part of the arcane theology of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Perſians, &c.

As to the myſteries, if, as the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moſes has endeavoured to prove, the doctrine of the one Supreme God, the Creator and Governor of the world, was taught there, it was the peculiar doctrine of the greater myſteries, com-

(*b*) Dial. cum Tryph. Oper. p. 345. C. Paris 1636.

municated under the moſt tremendous ſeal of ſecrecy to ſuch only of the initiated as were fit to be intruſted with the ſecret, and who were under the moſt ſolemn obligations not to reveal it. And can it with any conſiſtency be ſuppoſed, that this would have been reſerved for the myſteries as a profound ſecret which it was not lawful to reveal, if it was a thing which the people in general were acquainted with before, and which was an article of the common received religion? But in juſtice to the learned author laſt referred to it muſt be owned, that he is not chargeable with this inconſiſtency. He ſays, " the knowledge of God was commu-" nicated to a few ſelect Gentiles in the myſteries celebrated in ſe-" cret (*c*)." That " they ſhut up the glory of God in their my-" ſteries, from a falſe notion, that the vulgar knowledge of God " would be injurious to ſociety:" and he adds, that " in the " open worſhip of Paganiſm, either public or particular, the crea-" ture was the ſole object of adoration (*d*)."

The learned Dr. Sykes, who ſeems very deſirous to make the doctrine of the unity and perfections of the Deity paſs for the univerſal doctrine of the Pagans, and which they derived not from revelation or tradition, but from the mere light of nature, yet is obliged to make acknowledgments which are no way favourable to his ſcheme. He ſays, that " the myſteries among the Hea-" thens were of that kind as to ſet them right in many parts of " their theology: but that it was very difficult for them to get

(*c*) Div. Leg. vol. i. p. 166. 4th. Edit.

(*d*) Ibid. p. 196.

" admiſſion

" admiſſion to thoſe who could or would ſet them right: and " that it is very plain, that their beſt and wiſeſt men travelled " from Greece into Egypt, to get at the knowledge of the unity " of God, and the like important truths (*e*)." And this ſurely they would not have done, if it had been a doctrine commonly known among the people by the mere light of nature. The ſame ingenious writer having ſaid, that " the Egyptians did teach one " only Supreme Mind, the Maker and Governor of all," obſerves, that " this was a part of the ſecret theology of the Egyptians, " which was imparted only to their kings and prieſts; and that " Pythagoras was at ſo much pains as to be circumciſed, and had " the king's letters to the prieſts, in order to his getting acquaint- " ed with their theology (*f*)." And he there farther obſerves, that " the grand ſecret of the Pythagorean philoſophy was alſo " this, That there is one God, the Supreme Governor of all." And every one knows how careful Pythagoras and his followers were to keep the ſecrets of their philoſophy concealed from the people: nor were they communicated even to their own diſciples, till after a long and difficult preparation. He alſo ſuppoſes, that Plato had his notions of God from Egypt (*g*). And this philoſopher, in conformity to the Egyptian maxims, looked upon it to be a dangerous thing to declare it openly to the people. It is eaſy to ſee that theſe ſuppoſitions are not very conſiſtent with the hypo-

(*e*) Connexion of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 383.

(*f*) Ibid. p. 475.

(*g*) Ibid. p. 480. 494.

theſis,

theſis, that the knowledge of the one true God, his perfections and providence, was the common doctrine of the Pagan world.

The eminent Dr. Cudworth frequently obſerves, that " from " the antient Egyptian theology the Greekiſh and European is " derived." And he has taken a great deal of pains to ſhew, that " the Egyptians had among them an acknowledgment of one ſu- " preme univerſal numen." This is the ſubject of the 18th ſection of the 4th chapter of his Intellectual Syſtem: though I muſt confeſs, if this be underſtood of the one true God, the proofs that are brought for it throughout that long ſection, which takes up near fifty pages, do not ſeem to me to be ſatisfactory. He himſelf aſſerts, and it appears to be ſo from the teſtimonies produced by him, that " as well according to the Greeks as the Egyptians, " the firſt or ſupreme God, and the τὸ πᾶν or the univerſe, were " really the ſame thing (*b*)." But if it ſhould be granted, that the Egyptian wiſe men had right notions of the one Supreme God, the Doctor himſelf repreſents this as a part of their arcane theology, which was imparted to a very few, and carefully concealed from the people.

I think enough has been ſaid to ſhew, that there is no ſufficient ground for what this learned writer aſſerts, That according to the received theology both of the Greeks and Latins, not only the philoſophers and wiſe men, but even the vulgar Pagans, acknowledged the one ſupreme God, the Lord of heaven and earth,

(*b*) Intel. Syſt. p. 345.

the ſame whom we adore, and directed their worſhip to him under the name of Jupiter. And indeed there are ſeveral paſſages in his book not very conſiſtent with this ſcheme. He diſtinguiſhes the vulgar theology of the Pagans, under which he comprehends both the *poetical* or *mythical*, and the *civil* or *political* theology, from the *natural* and *true* theology (*i*). And he ſeems to confine what he ſays of the worſhipping the one true God under different names and titles to thoſe whom he calls the "more intelligent "Pagans (*k*)." Who theſe are he does not diſtinctly inform us, but probably he intends to diſtinguiſh them from the generality of the vulgar. And it appears from ſeveral paſſages which have been produced from him in the courſe of this work, That even the moſt learned among the Pagans were for the moſt part greatly deficient and wrong in their notions of the one Supreme God: that all of them in general were world-worſhippers, and worſhipped the ſeveral parts of this material ſyſtem, which they looked upon to be animated, as parts and members of the Divinity: that the moſt refined of them agreed in theſe two things, the breaking and crumbling the one ſimple Deity, and multiplying it into many gods: and then in theologizing the whole world, and deifying the natures of things, accidents, and inanimate bodies (*l*): that the people by Jupiter, the chief of their deities, generally underſtood the Jupiter of the poets and mythologiſts: and that there was a perpetual jumble or mixture of herology, or

(*i*) Intel. Syſt. p. 477.

(*k*) Ibid. p. 265.

(*l*) Ibid. p. 532, 533.

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the hiſtory of their hero gods, and phyſiology, along with their theology: that their public political worſhip had an appearance of a plurality of diſtinct independent divinities, and that the people regarded and worſhipped them as ſuch: and that they were generally ſtrangers to what he calls the recondite theology of the Pagans, viz. that the one God was worſhipped under different names and manifeſtations. Theſe conceſſions, and others of the like kind, which this learned author is frequently obliged to make, do in reality overthrow the hypotheſis which he takes ſo much pains to eſtabliſh.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

A ſecond general reflection. The corruption of religion in the Heathen world is no juſt objection againſt the wiſdom and goodneſs of Divine Providence. God did not leave himſelf without witneſs amongſt them. They had for a long time ſome remains of antient tradition originally derived from Revelation. Beſides which, they had the ſtanding evidences of a Deity in his wonderful works. The Jewiſh Revelation was originally deſigned to give a check to the growing idolatry, and had a tendency to ſpread the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God among the nations: and it actually had that effect in many inſtances. If the generality of the Pagans made no uſe of theſe advantages, but ſtill perſiſted in their idolatry and polytheiſm, the fault is not to be charged upon God, but upon themſelves.

THE repreſentation which hath been made of the ſtate of the Heathen world may poſſibly give occaſion to the enemies of all religion, to arraign the wiſdom, the righteouſneſs, and goodneſs of Divine Providence. It may ſeem ſcarce reconcilable to the moral adminiſtration of God, ſuppoſing him to concern himſelf about mankind, to leave all nations in general to continue for many ages in ſuch a deplorable ſtate of darkneſs, ſuperſtition, and idolatry, without affording them any means to guard againſt it, or recover them from it. And if this were really the caſe, it might ſeem to furniſh a ſtrong objection againſt Providence: but

I ſhall now proceed to ſhew that this is far from being a juſt and fair account of this matter.

It hath been already obſerved, that God gave a ſufficient Revelation of himſelf and of his will to the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race, before and after the flood, to be by them tranſmitted to their poſterity: that beſides the general revelations made to Adam and Noah, and which through them were promulgated to the whole human race, God was pleaſed from time to time in thoſe early ages to make particular diſcoveries of himſelf to particular perſons in different countries, which had a tendency to preſerve the knowledge of the one true God, of his Providence, and the worſhip due to him: that conſiderable remains of the antient primitive religion and traditions continued for ſome time among the nations, and which they were under the ſtrongeſt obligations to maintain in their purity: and that the ſtanding evidences of a Deity in the works of Creation and Providence, concurred to give an additional weight to thoſe traditions concerning the one true God, the great Creator and Governor of the world. For though it has been matter of controverſy, whether men that had not heard of a Deity, could, if left to themſelves without inſtruction, have come to the knowledge of the one true God merely by the unaſſiſted force of their own reaſon; yet it is acknowledged by all, that when once the idea of God has been known and communicated, the conſideration of his wonderful works has a manifeſt tendency, if duly improved, to preſerve that idea, which is agreeable to the common reaſon of mankind. In this reſpect God never left himſelf without witneſs in any age or nation

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of the world. Taking all this together, it cannot be denied, that enough was done on God's part in his diſpenſations towards the human race to keep up a ſenſe of the Deity, and the knowledge and practice of religion in the world. And if he had done no more in an extraordinary way, but had after this left men wholly to the light of nature and reaſon, ſtrengthened with thoſe traditionary helps which were originally owing to Divine Revelation, none could have reaſonably found fault.

It was in Chaldea, Canaan, Egypt, and the neighbouring countries, that the great corruption firſt began; or at leaſt theſe were the places where it made the moſt conſiderable progreſs, and from whence it ſeems to have been derived to other nations. And accordingly it pleaſed God in his wiſe and good Providence to take proper methods for putting an early check to the growing corruption in thoſe parts of the world where it chiefly prevailed. To this purpoſe he called Abraham, and made extraordinary diſcoveries of his will to him, who was a perſon of great eminence, and an illuſtrious example of faith and piety. The fame of his wiſdom and virtue has ſpread far and wide among the nations, as appears from the teſtimonies of Beroſus, Hecatæus, and Nicholaus Damaſcenus, cited by Joſephus, as alſo from what is ſaid of him by Alexander Polyhiſtor, Eupolemus, Artapanus, and others, whoſe teſtimonies may be ſeen in Euſebius (*n*). And his name is mentioned with honour all over the eaſt to this day. He ſojourned in Chaldea, in Egypt, and in Canaan, where alſo lived that

(*n*) Præp. Evangel. lib. ix. cap. 16, 17, 18, 19.

eminent perſon Melchiſedek, and others, among whom the patriarchal religion was ſtill preſerved. Abraham appears, by the account given of him, to have been very careful to inſtruct his houſhold, which was very numerous, in the true religion. Gen. xviii. 19. And from him, by Hagar and Keturah, proceeded many and great nations, among whom the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, and religion in its main fundamental articles, ſeems to have continued for ſome ages. This may be gathered from ſeveral paſſages in the book of Job. And the ſame might probably appear concerning ſome other nations, if we were better acquainted with the antient hiſtory of mankind. But particularly care was taken to preſerve the true religion in the line by Iſaac, the heir of Abraham's faith and of the promiſes, from whom came Eſau and Jacob and their numerous deſcendants. The advancement of Joſeph in Egypt by an extraordinary Providence, and the ſettling of Jacob and his family there, which ſoon grew up into a nation, and among ſome of whom at leaſt the knowledge of the true God was ſtill in ſome meaſure maintained, ought to have had a good effect upon the Egyptians.

It is probable, that there were for a long time particular perſons among the nations, who were not as yet infected with the common idolatry. But their authority and influence was of ſmall weight, and little regarded. It pleaſed God therefore in his great wiſdom and goodneſs towards mankind, as a farther preſervative againſt the ſpreading idolatry, which was in danger of becoming univerſal, to make diſcoveries of his will not merely to a few particular perſons, but to a whole nation ſet apart for that purpoſe.

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By an extraordinary divine interpoſition, a conſtitution of a peculiar kind was eſtabliſhed, the fundamental principle of which was, the acknowledgment and adoration of the one living and true God, and of him only. And to give weight to this conſtitution, which was ſo different from thoſe eſtabliſhed by the legiſlators in other countries, who made idolatry and polytheiſm the baſis of their ſeveral polities, its divine authority was confirmed by the moſt illuſtrious atteſtations, and by a ſeries of wonderful acts, which exhibited the moſt amazing diſplays of his unequalled power and glory. Such was the Moſaic conſtitution; which was introduced with a glorious triumph over idol deities even in Egypt the principal ſeat of idolatry, and was attended with ſuch circumſtances, as were peculiarly fitted to awaken and engage the attention of mankind. The people among whom this conſtitution and polity was erected, were not placed in a remote and obſcure corner of the earth, but in ſuch a ſituation as was admirably fitted for diffuſing the knowledge of their religion and laws. They were placed in the center of the then known world, between Egypt and Arabia on the one hand, and Syria, Chaldea, and Aſſyria on the other, among whom the firſt great kingdoms were erected, and from whence knowledge and learning ſeems to have been derived to the weſtern nations. And they were alſo in the neighbourhood of Sidon and Tyre, the greateſt emporiums in the world, from whence ſhips went to all parts, and who planted colonies in the moſt diſtant countries. Nor were the Iſraelites themſelves a very ſmall and contemptible people. Conſidering the amazing multiplication of their nation, they bore no very inconſiderable proportion to the numbers of the reſt of mankind in

thoſe ages of the world (*o*). And their peculiar polity, together with the extraordinary acts of the Divine Providence towards them, had a natural tendency to put the neighbouring people upon making an enquiry into their religion and laws, which would be apt to lead them to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, and to diſcover to them the folly and unreaſonableneſs of their own ſuperſtition and idolatry. And that this was really part of the deſign which the Divine Wiſdom had in view in his diſpenſations towards the people of Iſrael, appeareth from ſeveral expreſs paſſages of Scripture (*p*). Their laws indeed were ſo contrived as to keep them diſtinct from other people, and it was neceſſary for wiſe ends they ſhould be ſo; but they were ready to receive among them thoſe of other nations, who were willing to forſake idolatry, and to worſhip the one true God, the Creator of the univerſe, and him only. In the moſt flouriſhing times of their ſtate, particularly in the reigns of David and Solomon, they had an extenſive dominion and correſpondence. And afterwards they had frequent intercourſe with Egypt, Syria, Aſſyria, Babylonia, and Perſia. And if we conſider what is related concerning Hiram king of Tyre, and the Queen of Sheba, as well as the memorable decrees of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Darius the Mede, Cyrus, Darius Hyſtaſpes, and Artaxerxes, kings of Perſia, the greateſt monarchs then upon earth, and who publiſhed to

(*o*) See concerning this the Poſtſcript to Dr. Waterland's Scripture vindicated, part 2d. p. 138, 139.

(*p*) See particularly Exod. vii. 15. ix. 16. xiv. 4. Numb. xiv. 13, 14. 21. Deut. iv. 6. 1 Kings viii. 41, 42, 43. Pſal. xxi. 27. lxvii. 2, 3. lxviii. 29, 31, 32.

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the world the veneration they had for the God whom the Iſraelites adored, as the great Lord of the univerſe; and if to this be added the eminent advancement of Daniel, and his three companions, who were zealous adorers of the Deity, in oppoſition to all idolatry; and afterwards the great power and authority of Eſther and Mordecai, and the ſpecial favour ſhewn to the Jews in the reign of king Ahaſuerus, when we are told, that "many of the people "of the land became Jews:" if we conſider theſe things, it is very probable, that the fame of their laws, and of the remarkable interpoſitions of Divine Providence in their favour, whilſt they continued in the obſervation of thoſe laws, as well as of the calamities which had befallen them when they fell off from their law to the worſhip of idol deities, was diffuſed far and wide among the nations. And this might contribute in more inſtances than is commonly imagined to keep up the knowledge of the one true God, the Maker and Lord of the univerſe, and to give ſome check to the prevailing idolatry.

I am ſenſible that there are many who are very unwilling to acknowledge that the Gentiles, or any of their great and wiſe men, received any advantage from the Jews with reſpect to the knowledge of the one true God (*q*). And for this purpoſe they repreſent

(*q*) It is a thing well known that many of the primitive fathers of the Chriſtian church inſiſted upon it, that the Greeks borrowed their learning and knowledge from the Hebrews. And it cannot be denied, that ſome of thoſe good men carried this too far, and were ready to catch at any thing in the writings of the Greek philoſophers and poets, which ſeemed to bear even the moſt diſtant reſemblance to what might be found in the books of Moſes and the prophets. In oppoſition to this ſome of the moderns have gone into the contrary extreme. An ingenious and learned

ſent them as the moſt deſpicable people upon earth, and for whom all other nations had the utmoſt contempt and averſion. That the populace hated and deſpiſed them and their religion, and that many

learned writer, whom I have had occaſion to mention before, has taken a great deal of pains to examine and expoſe the inſtances produced by the Fathers in ſupport of their hypotheſis *. But ſuppoſing thoſe inſtances to have been wrong choſen (though I do not think that he has proved that they are all ſo) it would only ſhew that they were miſtaken in thoſe particular inſtances, but not that the notion itſelf is abſurd and falſe. He readily allows, and even aſſerts, that the Greek philoſophers learned many things from the Egyptians and Chaldeans, but will by no means grant they learned any thing from the Hebrews. Yet he himſelf obſerves, that "it is certain Moſes lived long before any of the Greek philoſophers; that the "firſt good things any of them have ſaid about God, the creation of the world, "&c. were ſaid by Moſes, and the prophets, and were ſaid before any of their "philoſophers pretended to advance ſuch notions †." He adds indeed that "Egypt "taught this principle as well as Judea, and ſo did the Magians." But we have no authentic monuments to aſſure us of the antient theology of the Egyptians and Magians, as we have concerning that of the Hebrews. Since therefore the Greeks, by his own acknowledgment, travelled into the Eaſt "to get at the knowledge of "the Unity, and the like important truths of natural religion ‡," what reaſon can be aſſigned why the Jews alone of all the eaſtern nations ſhould be excluded, when we have much greater certainty that they taught theſe articles long before the Greek philoſophers flouriſhed, than we have concerning any of the other nations to which they travelled for knowledge? It is generally agreed among the antients that Pythagoras travelled into Egypt; and the ſame writers who inform us of this, do alſo acquaint us that he went into Phœnicia and Babylon, and continued there ſeveral years; and at Babylon the Jews were at that time well known. And Porphyry in his Life of Pythagoras, as cited by our learned author himſelf, expreſly ſays, that he not only travelled among the Egyptians and Arabians, but alſo went to the Hebrews and Chaldeans in order to acquire learning. The ſame may well be ſuppoſed concerning Plato, who imitated Pythagoras in his travels. The doctor indeed objects, that there was no tranſlation of the Jewiſh Scriptures into Greek, ſo early as the days of Pythagoras, or even as the time of Plato: but this does not hinder, but that they might have opportunities of converſing with ſome of the Jews in Egypt, Phœnicia, or Chaldea. The Egyptian and Chaldean language

* Dr. Sykes's Principles and Connexion of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 440, et ſeq. † Ibid. p. 493. ‡ Ibid. p. 383.

was

many of the philoſophers affected to do ſo too, is very true; but that this was not univerſally the caſe admits of a clear proof. Any man will be convinced of this that impartially conſiders the teſtimonies produced by Euſebius from Heathen authors in the ninth book of his Evangelical Preparation. Theophraſtus, as cited by Porphyry, repreſents the Jews as a nation or generation of philoſophers, "φιλοσοφοὶ τὸ γενὸς ὄντες," and who were wont to converſe with one another concerning the Divinity, "περὶ τοῦ θείου," to whom they offered up their prayers and vows (*r*). Hecatæus of Abdera, who was not only a philoſopher, but a man well verſed in affairs, gives an advantageous account of the Jews, as Joſephus has ſhewn in his firſt book againſt Apion. And Origen ſays, that this Hecatæus in his Hiſtory of the Jews, which was extant in his time, expreſſes

was alſo foreign both to Pythagoras and Plato, and yet the doctor ſuppoſes, that they took from them ſeveral of their notions and principles: ſo it might be with regard to the Jews, among whom the Phœnician, Chaldee, or Syriac language was then in common uſe. In Plato's time there were no doubt many of the Jews that underſtood Greek; and they had been for a long time ſettled in the Leſſer Aſia, as well as in many parts of the Eaſt. I ſee therefore no abſurdity in ſuppoſing with Juſtin Martyr, and others of the fathers, though Dr. Sykes blames them for it, that Plato might borrow ſome of his ſublime notions concerning God from the the Jews, or at leaſt from thoſe that had them from the Jews; which might have been the caſe of ſome of the Egyptians themſelves. For it appears from the expreſs teſtimony of Scripture, that the Egyptians had a high veneration for Moſes. "The "man Moſes was very great in the land of Egypt, in the ſight of Pharaoh's ſer-"vants, and in the ſight of the people." Exod. xi. 3. And conſidering the intercourſe that was carried on from time to time between Egypt and Judea, both in the time of Solomon, and afterwards, it is not improbable that ſome of their wiſe men might deſire to have acceſs to the Jewiſh law, and to ſome of their writings, ſo far at leaſt as to learn ſome things from them, of which they made their own uſe, though they did not think proper to acknowledge it.

(*r*) Porphyr. de Abſtin. lib. i. Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. ix. cap. 2.

his admiration of the wiſdom of that nation (*s*). Megaſthenes, in a paſſage quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus, ranks thoſe "that are "called Jews in Syria" with the "Brachmans in India," who were of the higheſt reputation for wiſdom among the Pagans, and repreſents them as having taught the ſame things with the Greek philoſophers (*t*). By comparing this with what Strabo tells us from Megaſthenes, it appears that the things here referred to are ſuch as theſe; that the world had a beginning and ſhall have an end, that God made and governs it, and pervades the whole, and that the earth was made out of a watry maſs (*u*). And as it is well known that the Greek philoſophers travelled into the Eaſt for knowledge, the Jews may well be reckoned among thoſe from whom they derived theſe principles. In like manner Numenius, a famous Pythagorean philoſopher, in his book περὶ τ'αγαθοῦ, ſpeaking of the δόγματα, the doctrines and inſtitutes, in uſe among the moſt celebrated nations, mentions the Jews along with the Brachmans, the Magi, and the Egyptians. And Origen informs us concerning the ſame Numenius, who, he ſays, was a perſon of great learning, that he reckons the Jews among the nations which believe God to be incorporeal; and that he was not aſhamed to make uſe of the words of their prophets, and to interpret their figurative ways of expreſſion (*x*). Artapanus wrote a book concerning the Jews, quoted by Alexander Polyhiſtor, large extracts of which are preſerved by Euſebius; and though his account is mixed with

(*s*) Origen contra Celſ. lib. i. p. 13, and Spenſer's notes upon it.

(*t*) Ap. Euſeb. ubi ſupra, lib. ix. cap. 6.

(*u*) Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1040. A. Amſtel.

Origen c(*x*) ontra Celſ. lib. i. p. 13.

fables, it ſerves to ſhew the high opinion the Heathens themſelves entertained of Moſes. Among other things he ſays of him, that he delivered every thing uſeful to mankind; that the Egyptian prieſts counted him worthy of divine honour, and attributed to him the invention of philoſophy, and called him Hermes or Mercury (*y*). Eupolemus calls him the firſt wiſe man, "τὸν πρῶτον "σοφον (*z*)." And Strabo in his account of the Jews ſpeaks very honourably of Moſes as having entertained nobler notions of the Divinity than the Egyptians, or Libyans, or Greeks. He makes the cauſe of his forſaking Egypt to be his being diſſatisfied with the notions and worſhip of the Deity which obtained there: and that many good men, and who honoured the Deity, "πολλοὶ τιμῶντες "τὸ θεῖον," accompanied him. And that thoſe who ſucceeded him continued for ſome time to be workers of righteouſneſs, and to be truly pious worſhippers of God, "δικαιοπραγοῦντες καὶ θεοσε-"βεῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ὄντες (*a*)." In like manner Juſtin out of Trogus Pompeius praiſes the antient Jews for their juſtice joined with religion. "Juſtitia religione permixta." That great man Varro plainly ſignifies that he thought the Jews were in the right in worſhipping one God, and without an image. He gives it indeed as his opinion, that they worſhipped Jupiter, only they called him by another name: where by Jupiter he means the higheſt God in the philoſophical ſenſe, which according to him was the ſoul of the world. St. Auſtin, who mentions this paſſage of Varro,

(*y*) Apud Euſeb. ubi ſupra, lib. ix. cap. 27.

(*z*) Ibid. cap. 26.

(*a*) Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 1104.

repreſents him as not knowing what he ſaid when he ſpoke thus, but that this however might be concluded from it, that he who was the moſt learned of the Romans and a man of ſo great knowledge, hereby gave teſtimony that the God of the prophets, and whom the Jews worſhipped, was in his opinion the Supreme God. "Ipſe eſt deus quem Varro doctiſſimus Romanorum Jovem pu-"tat, neſciens quid loquatur. Quod ideo commemorandum pu-"tavi, quoniam vir tantæ ſcientiæ, nec nullum iſtum deum potuit "exiſtimare nec vilem. Huno enim eum eſſe credidit quem "ſummum putavit Deum (*a*)." Porphyry in his firſt book of the Philoſophy of Oracles produces an oracle of Apollo, which ſpeaking of thoſe who knew and taught "the way of the bleſſed," particularly mentions the "Egyptians, Aſſyrians, or Chaldeans," and the "whole nation of the Hebrews." In another oracle mentioned by the ſame author it is ſaid, that the Chaldeans and Hebrews "alone obtained wiſdom, purely worſhipping God the "eternal or ſelf-originate king—αὐτογένεθλον ἀνάκτα." Another oracle is there alſo quoted in which they are called "ἀριζήλωτοι. "Ἔβραιοι, illuſtrious or worthy to be emulated." Though little ſtreſs is to be laid on the teſtimony of Apollo's oracles, it ſhews the opinion which had obtained among the Heathens themſelves of the wiſdom and religion of the Hebrews. For if their fame had not been far ſpread on this account, the oracle would ſcarce have deſcribed them under that character. To all which may be added the decrees made in their favour by the Romans and other

(*a*) Auguſtin. de Civ. Dei. lib. xix. cap. 22. p. 428. compared with lib. iii. cap. 9. p. 74. et lib. iv. cap. 31. p. 87.

ſtates,

ſtates, in which honourable mention is made of them, and they are allowed to obſerve their own laws and cuſtoms without diſturbance. Many of theſe are produced by Joſephus out of the public records, in the tenth chapter of the fourteenth book of his Jewiſh Antiquities. The decree of the city of Halicarnaſſus is particularly remarkable, which is introduced by ſaying, "ſince we have ever a "great regard to piety towards God and holineſs, we have decreed "that as many men and women of the Jews as are willing ſo to "do may celebrate their Sabbath, and perform their holy offices "according to the Jewiſh laws, and may have their Proſeuchæ at "the ſea ſide, according to the cuſtom of their forefathers (*b*)."

(*b*) It may not be improper here to obſerve, that the peculiar name of God, which was in the higheſt veneration among the Jews, and whereby the one true God was moſt properly denoted as the ſelf-exiſtent Being, was not unknown to the Gentiles. Diodorus Siculus tells us of Moſes the lawgiver of the Jews, that he declared that the God who is called *Iaω* delivered his laws to him *. Philo Biblius, the tranſlator of Sanchoniathon's Phœnician hiſtory, calls him *Ιευω*, where he pretends that Sanchoniathon received his hiſtory from Jerombaal the prieſt of the God *Ιευω*, who was near the time of Moſes, and lived before the Trojan war †. Macrobius tells us, that the oracle of the Clarian Apollo, being conſulted which of the gods it was that was called *Iaω*, anſwered, "call him that is the higheſt of the "gods *Iaω*." Where he ſpeaks of him as the Supreme Deity, though afterwards, as might be expected from the oracle, he applies it to the ſun ‡. It is alſo probable that the name Jovis and Jovis Pater, which was abbreviated into Jupiter, was derived from Jehovah: and as this name found its way into Italy in the moſt antient times, ſo might the notion ſignified by it be alſo communicated. And indeed ſome remarkable traces of the antient primitive religion ſeem to have continued in Italy in the firſt times of the Roman ſtate; though afterwards this venerable name, which was originally deſigned to ſignify the one true God, became tranſferred to the chief of the idol deities, to whom the divine attributes and worſhip were alſo aſcribed.

* Diod. Sic. Biblioth. lib. i. † Apud Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. 4. cap. 3. p. 31. A. B. ‡ Macrob. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 18.

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From theſe ſeveral teſtimonies, to which others might be added, it appears, that notwithſtanding the popular prejudices againſt the Jews, there were not a few among the Heathens, that had an eſteem for them and a good opinion of their laws. And as it was well known, that they worſhipped one only God, the Maker of heaven and earth, it is very probable that ſome of thoſe paſſages which are admired in the Pagan writers, ſuch as that of Sophocles and Aratus above-mentioned, might have been originally owing to light derived from the Hebrews. Many of them, from the beginning of the Perſian empire, were not only ſcattered abroad through Perſia, Babylonia, and other parts of the eaſt, but were ſeated in the Leſſer Aſia. And Providence ordered it ſo that their numbers continually increaſed, and their diſperſions anſwered a valuable end. Cicero ſpeaks of it as a thing well known, that the Jews were wont to ſend gold every year from Italy, and all the Roman provinces, to their temple at Jeruſalem (*c*). The elder Agrippa, in a letter written to the emperor Caligula, of which Philo gives us an account, tells him, that both the continent and the moſt remarkable iſlands were full of Jewiſh colonies; and that ſcarce any country of note could be mentioned in which ſome of them had not their reſidence (*d*). To the ſame purpoſe Agrippa the younger, in a ſpeech to the Jews, endeavours to diſſuade them from entering into a war with the Romans from this conſideration, that they would thereby expoſe their countrymen to ruin; for that there was not a people upon earth which had not ſome por-

(*c*) Oratio pro Flacco. n. 28.

(*d*) Philo in Legat. ad Caium, Oper. p. 1031, 1032.

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tion of their nation among them (*e*). The ſame thing is ſaid by Philo, who alſo affirms, that there were not leſs than a million of Jews in Alexandria, and other parts of Egypt (*f*). And Strabo, as cited by Joſephus, ſaith, that "the Jews had already gotten into all "cities:" that it is not eaſy to find a place in the habitable earth, which hath not admitted that tribe of men amongſt them: and that many imitated their manner of living, and made uſe of the ſame laws. He particularly obſerves, that "a large part of the "city of Alexandria was peculiarly allotted to them: and that they were allowed to be governed by their own laws (*g*). Seneca in his book De Superſtitione, as cited by St. Auſtin, at the ſame time that he diſcovers a very ſtrong prejudice againſt the Jews, and blames their rites, eſpecially their ſolemnizing the Sabbath, as an idle ſuperſtition, yet ſignifies, that this and other rites of theirs prevailed very much among the nations. "Cum interim uſque "eò ſceleratiſſimæ gentis conſuetudo convaluit, ut per omnes ferè "terras recepta ſit: victi victoribus leges dederunt (*h*)." And as the Sabbath was peculiarly ſet apart for commemorating the creation of the world, and honouring the Maker of the univerſe, if the obſervation of the Jewiſh Sabbath ſpread among the Gentiles, this ſhews that the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was propagated among them. Add to all this, that the Jewiſh Scriptures having been tranſlated into Greek, the language

(*e*) Joſeph. de Bel. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 16.

(*f*) Philo in Flac. Opera, p. 971.

(*g*) Apud Joſeph. Antiq. lib. xiv. cap. 7. ſect. 2.

(*h*) Apud Auguſt. de Civ. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 11. p. 124.

then

then almoſt univerſally underſtood, became very generally diſperſed. It cannot therefore be juſtly ſaid, that the Gentiles were debarred from all benefit of Revelation, ſince beſides the remains of antient tradition ſtill preſerved amongſt them, and which were originally owing to Divine Revelation, a conſiderable part of the Heathen world had opportunities, by means of the Jews diſperſed among them, of attaining to the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, and diſcovering the error and vanity of their idolatry and polytheiſm. And that many were by this means brought over from their idolatries we have good reaſon to believe; both from ſeveral paſſages in Joſephus, and from the numbers of devout Gentiles in many cities of note, when Chriſtianity was firſt publiſhed: of which we have an account in the Acts of the Apoſtles. And if the main body of the Pagans in every nation, and even their wiſe men and philoſophers, ſtill continued obſtinately to adhere to the antient popular ſuperſtition and idolatry, and inſtead of making a proper uſe of the advantages hereby given them, either deſpiſed the Jews as unworthy of their notice, and rejected their religion at once without examination and enquiry, or hated them for having a religion ſo oppoſite to their own (*i*); the fault is to be charged upon themſelves, who neglected thoſe means

(*i*) Cicero in his oration for L. Flaccus calls the Jewiſh religion a "barbarous "ſuperſtition," and repreſents it as "abhorrent from the gravity of the Roman "name, the ſplendor of their empire, and the inſtitutions of their anceſtors." And yet if that great man had allowed himſelf to examine it, he would have found that it taught nobler notions of the Divinity than even their moſt admired philoſophers. But the views of human policy, the pride of their own wiſdom, the contempt they had for thoſe whom they accounted and called Barbarians, and their attachment to the rites and laws of their anceſtors, hindered the greateſt and wiſeſt men of Greece and

means and helps, as they had done before the diſcoveries conveyed to them by antient tradition, and the light held forth to them in the works of Creation and Providence. What farther ſhews

and Rome from judging impartially of a religion which was ſo contrary to the eſtabliſhed polytheiſm and idolatry. Nothing can be more unfair and diſingenuous than the repreſentations made by ſome of their celebrated hiſtorians of the original of the Jewiſh nation, of their religion and laws. There are indeed ſome ſtrictures of truth in their accounts, but they are mixed with ſo many falſhoods and abſurdities, as plainly ſhew how ſtrongly they were prejudiced againſt them, and how little care they took to get a right information concerning them, which, if they had been ſo diſpoſed, they might eaſily have procured. Such are the accounts given of them by Juſtin from Trogus Pompeius, by Diodorus Siculus, and Tacitus. This laſt mentioned author, who was a man of admirable parts and ſagacity, and in other reſpects an exact and faithful writer, tells us the Jews conſecrated the image of an aſs in the ſanctuary of their temple, and made it the object of their worſhip, becauſe, as he pretends, a herd of aſſes had led them to a rock where they found large ſprings of water, when they were ready to periſh for thirſt in the wilderneſs *. What renders him the leſs excuſable in adopting this ſilly ſtory is, that ſoon after he himſelf is obliged to own, that " whereas the Egyptians pay divine honours to animals, and " to images made by art, the Jews acknowledge but one God, to be apprehended " only by the mind: they account thoſe prophane who frame images of the gods " out of periſhable materials in the form and likeneſs of men: and hold that that " ſupreme eternal Being is neither liable to change, nor ſhall ever die: and therefore " there are no images in their cities, much leſs in their temples."—" Egyptii plera- " que animalia effigieſque compoſitas venerantur; Judæi mente ſolâ unumque numen " intelligunt: profanos qui deûm imagines, mortalibus materiis, in ſpeciem homi- " num effingunt: ſummum illud et æternum, neque mutabile, neque interiturum: " igitur nulla ſimulacra urbibus ſuis, nedum templis ſunt †." And accordingly he afterwards obſerves, that Pompey, the firſt of the Romans that ſubdued the Jews, and who entered the temple by right of conqueſt, found no image of the gods there, but the holy place vacant and empty ‡. That great philoſopher and hiſtorian Plutarch, a man of vaſt reading, and who was curious and diligent in his enquiries, yet in what relates to the Jews betrays a ſhameful ignorance or the ſtrongeſt prejudices. He charges them, as Tacitus had done, with worſhipping an aſs; and is in a doubt whether they did not abſtain from ſwine's fleſh out of a peculiar veneration they had for that animal. The account he pretends to give of their ſacred rites is perfectly

* Tacit. Hiſt. lib. v. cap. 4. † Ibid. cap. 5. ‡ Ibid. cap. 9.

ſhews the great propriety and uſefulneſs of the peculiar Jewiſh conſtitution, and the Revelation made to the people of Iſrael, is, that not only rays of light were from thence ſcattered abroad among the Pagans, which might have been of great advantage if duly improved, but that it had a great tendency to prepare the world for receiving that moſt perfect diſpenſation which was to ſucceed it, and which was to be of a more general extent, and more univerſally diffuſed.

It appears from the ſeveral conſiderations which have been offered, that a great deal was done in the methods of Divine Providence, for preventing or reclaiming the nations from the idolatry and polytheiſm in which they came to be generally involved. And

trifling and and ridiculous *. And yet if he had pleaſed, he might eaſily have procured better information. The Jews were diſperſed in great numbers among the nations. Their ſacred Writings, which had been long tranſlated into Greek, were in many hands. The books of Joſephus and Philo, both of them fine writers, were extant. He indeed takes upon him to pronounce, that what is ſaid by themſelves concerning theſe things is fabulous. But it is plain he did not conſult the Jewiſh writings and records, which would have been the proper and rational way to get a right information. I think what Origen ſays to Celſus is extremely juſt: "It is proper to aſk Celſus," ſays he, "why he who mentions with approbation "the hiſtories of the Greeks and Barbarians, and gives credit to their antiquities, "ſhould only doubt of the antiquities of the Jews. If the writers of other nations "give a true account of their own affairs, why are the Jewiſh prophets the only "perſons we refuſe to believe †?" But that the true ſource of Celſus's prejudice againſt them was their maintaining the unity of God in oppoſition to the common polytheiſm, may be gathered from what he himſelf ſaith of the people of Iſrael; that "thoſe goat-herds and ſhepherds, following Moſes as their leader, being im-"poſed upon by his ruſtic frauds, believed there is only one God ‡."

* Plut. Sympoſ. lib. iv. quæſt. 5. Oper. tom. II. p. 670. et ſeq. † Orig. contra Celſ. lib. i. p. 22, 13. ‡ Ibid. p. 17, 18.

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the ſtate of religion among them would have had a quite different appearance, if they had made that uſe and improvement of the means that were put into their hands, which it was really in their power to have done, and had applied themſelves to it with that care and diligence which a matter of ſuch vaſt importance required. And therefore St. Paul juſtly pronounces concerning them, that they "liked not to retain God in their knowledge," and that they "were without excuſe—ἀναπολογήτους," i. e. unable to make a ſufficient apology for themſelves, if called to a ſtrict account at the bar of God. Yet what allowances it may pleaſe him in his infinite mercy to make for the circumſtances they were in, and the ignorance, errors, and prejudices under which they laboured, we cannot take upon us to determine; but muſt leave it to him, the moſt wiſe and merciful as well as righteous judge and father of mankind, who will certainly do what is fitteſt and beſt.

It is proper on this occaſion to obſerve the great goodneſs of God, and the patience and forbearance he exerciſed towards a corrupt and idolatrous world. Though they were ſo far fallen from the knowledge and worſhip of him the only true God, and inſtead of glorifying him as God, gave the glory due to him alone to falſe and fictitious deities, he did not abſolutely abandon them, nor pour forth thoſe judgments upon them which their iniquities had deſerved. He continued to do them good in the methods of his wiſe and kind Providence; and ſo ordered it, that ſome remains of religion were ſtill preſerved among them. The idea of a Deity, and a governing inviſible power, and of a Providence that takes

cognizance of human actions and affairs, though mixed with much obſcurity, and attended with many and great errors, was never utterly extinguiſhed. There ſtill remained ſome ſenſe of the moral differences of things, and ſome feeble apprehenſions of a future ſtate of retributions. Theſe things were helpful to lay ſome reſtraints upon vice and wickedneſs, to furniſh ſome encouragements and ſupports to virtue, to give force to civil laws and government, and to maintain the face of order in the world. Such is the force of theſe principles, that where they are even in the leaſt degree preſerved and ſuffered to operate, they can ſcarce fail to produce ſome beneficial effects for the good of ſociety. Whereas abſolute atheiſm and the want of all religion ſaps the foundation of all order, tends to diſſolve the ſtrongeſt bands of human ſociety, and to open a wide door for univerſal confuſion and licentiouſneſs. And therefore the reclaiming mankind from the darkneſs and corruption into which they were generally fallen, to the right knowledge, obedience, and adoration of the one true God, the clearing and confirming the main principles of religion, which were greatly weakened and obſcured, and enforcing them by a divine authority and power on the minds and conſciences of men, and the recovering men from the ſtate of guilt and condemnation in which they lay involved, to a well-grounded hope of pardon and ſalvation; this muſt be acknowledged to be a deſign worthy of the Divine wiſdom and goodneſs. Such is the deſign of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, which was introduced into the world at a time when it was moſt wanted, and when the need mankind ſtood in of ſuch an extraordinary interpoſition of Divine Providence manifeſtly appeared.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

A third general reflection. Idolatry gathered ſtrength among the nations, as they grew in learning and politeneſs. Religion in ſeveral reſpects leſs corrupted in the ruder and more illiterate than in the politer ages. The arts and ſciences made a very great progreſs in the Heathen world: yet they ſtill became more and more addicted to the moſt abſurd idolatries, as well as to the moſt abominable vices; both of which were at the height at the time of our Saviour's appearance.

ANOTHER important reflection which may help to caſt farther light on the preſent ſubject is this; that ſuperſtition and idolatry, inſtead of being corrected and diminiſhed, rather increaſed and gathered ſtrength among the Heathen nations as they grew in learning and politeneſs. Any one that conſiders the accounts which are given us of the progreſs of arts and ſciences, how from rude beginnings they were ſtill advancing to greater perfection, and that as the nations became more knowing and civilized, theſe were continually improving, will be apt to think that ſo it muſt have been with religion too. It is natural to ſuppoſe, that as their knowledge was more extended, and their underſtandings better cultivated, and exerciſed in the arts of reaſoning, they muſt have more clearly ſeen the abſurdity of ſuperſtition and idolatry, and have attained to higher improvements in religion, and in the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, as well as in other branches of ſcience. And yet if we conſult

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fact and experience we ſhall find, that the religion of the Gentiles in the moſt antient times was in ſeveral inſtances more pure and ſimple, leſs incumbered and corrupted with idolatry, than in ſucceeding ages, when the arts and ſciences had made a conſiderable progreſs. This ſeems to ſhew, that the knowledge men had of God and Religion in the firſt ages was originally owing not merely to the efforts of their own reaſon, which was then little cultivated and improved, but to a Divine Revelation made to the firſt of the human race, and from them communicated to their poſterity. It might have been hoped, that this tradition, which, when duly propoſed, is agreeable to right reaſon, would have been preſerved with great care, eſpecially when learning and knowledge were improved: but it ſoon began to degenerate, and became the more corrupt the farther it was removed from its original. The true primitive Theiſm, which was the moſt antient religion of mankind, became ſoon adulterated with mixtures of polytheiſm, ſtill preſerving for the moſt part, amidſt all their corruptions, ſome obſcure idea of one Supreme Divinity, till at length it was almoſt loſt and confounded amidſt a multiplicity of idol deities.

It has been already ſhewn, that the moſt antient idolatry and deviation from the worſhip of the one true God, was the worſhip of heaven and the heavenly bodies. But the firſt idolaters, as Euſebius obſerves, did not erect ſtatues or images to them, but contented themſelves with fixing their eyes upon the viſible heavens, and worſhipping what they beheld there (*k*). This is agree-

(*k*) Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 6. p. 17. Paris 1628.

able

able to the repreſentation made of it in the antient book of Job, where it is intimated that thoſe who then worſhipped the heavenly bodies, were wont to do it by liſting up their eyes towards heaven, and bowing and kiſſing their hands to them when they appeared in their ſplendor. That holy man, to clear himſelf from all ſuſpicion of idolatry, which was then making a progreſs in thoſe parts, in his admirable apology expreſſes himſelf thus: "If "I beheld the ſun when it ſhined, or the moon walking in "brightneſs—and my heart hath been ſecretly enticed, or my "mouth hath kiſſed my hand; this alſo were an iniquity to be "puniſhed by the judge: for I ſhould have denied the God that "is above." Job xxxi. 26, 27, 28. And Moſes ſeems to intimate the ſame thing, Deut. iv. 19. "Leſt thou lift up thine "eyes unto heaven, and when thou ſeeſt the ſun, and the moon, "and the ſtars, even all the hoſt of heaven, ſhouldſt be driven to "worſhip and ſerve them." And he diſtinguiſheth this from the idolatry of image-worſhip, which he had forbidden juſt before.

It is another obſervation of Euſebius concerning the idolaters of the moſt antient times, that they made no mention of that multitude of hero-deities which were afterwards worſhipped both among the Greeks and Barbarians. There was among them no theogonia, or fabulous account of the generation of the gods. The numerous rabble of gods and heroes, with the monſtrous fictions relating to them, were of later date, and had their riſe among the Egyptians and Phœnicians, and from them were propagated to the Greeks (*l*). It was among the Chaldeans, Phœnicians, and Egyptians, that

(*l*) Euſeb. ubi ſupra, cap. 9. p. 29, 30.

image-

image-worſhip, as well as that of hero gods or deified men, ſeems to have firſt obtained. The firſt approach towards image-worſhip among the nations was, as ſome learned men probably ſuppoſe, their erecting ſtones and pillars in honour of their deities. This ſeems to have been an abuſe of a cuſtom that was originally uſed by the worſhippers of the true God, who were wont to erect large ſtones as monuments in places where in thoſe antient times there had been remarkable divine appearances: and there they erected altars and offered ſacrifices. Of this we have a memorable inſtance in that good man Jacob. Having at the end of his firſt day's journey towards Meſopotamia had a divine viſion, in which God was pleaſed to appear to him in a viſible glory attended with his holy angels, and repeated thoſe promiſes to him which he had before made to his pious progenitors Abraham and Iſaac, he took a large ſtone, and ſet it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it, and thereby conſecrated it to a religious uſe; and this probably in conformity to antient cuſtom. And he called the name of that place Bethel, "the houſe of God." Gen. xxviii. 18, 19. At the ſame time he made a ſolemn vow, that if he returned in ſafety to his father's houſe, this ſtone which he had ſet up for a pillar ſhould be God's houſe, that is, the place where he would erect an altar to the only true God, and offer ſacrifices to him. And this accordingly he afterwards did by the divine command: but he firſt took care to purify his family, and put away the ſtrange gods which were among them; ſome of his numerous family having privily introduced idolatrous uſages. Gen. xxxv. 1—4. Some learned perſons, particularly the famous Joſeph Scaliger and Bochart, have ingeniouſly conjectured, that from the ſtone erected into a pillar by Jacob,

and his calling the place Bethel, came the word βαιτύλια uſed among the Heathens, and eſpecially the Phœnicians, to ſignify thoſe rude ſtones which were conſecrated as ſymbols of the Divinity, and in which they thought ſome Divine Power reſided (*m*). Theſe were worſhipped by them, as ſtatues and images were afterwards. And in this as well as other inſtances, the rites and uſages which were originally deſigned in honour of the one true God, were in proceſs of time miſapplied to the worſhip of idol deities. In the Chron. Alexand. p. 89. it is ſaid, that the Aſſyrians were the firſt who ſet up a pillar to the planet Mars, and worſhipped it as a god (*n*). Herodian mentions a pillar or large ſtone erected in honour of the ſun, and called Eligabalus. And Pauſanias in Arcadicis obſerves, that in the moſt antient times, univerſally among the Greeks, inſtead of images rude ſtones had divine honours rendered. "ἀντὶ ἀγαλμάτων εἶχον ἀρχαῖοι λίθοι τιμάς." Theſe were ſucceeded by ſtatues and images, which at firſt had little workmanſhip beſtowed upon them, but as the arts began to flouriſh, and the worſhip of hero gods and goddeſſes became more in faſhion, they were wrought up with great art and beauty. It was becauſe pillars were ſo much abuſed to idolatrous purpoſes, that the religious uſe of them, as well as of ſtatues and images, was expreſly forbidden in the law of Moſes. Levit. xxvi. 1. Deut. xvi. 22. The word in the Hebrew in both theſe places is Matzebah, rendered by our tranſlators "a ſtanding image," but by the Septuagint

(*m*) Scaliger Animadverſ. in Euſeb. p. 198. Bochart. Canaan, lib. ii. cap. 2.

(*n*) Shuckford's Connect. of Sacred and Profane Hiſtory, Vol. I. p. 328, 329.

ϛ֯ηλη "a pillar," as it is alſo in the margin of our Bibles; and thus it is underſtood by the Jews, as Mr. Selden has ſhewn (*o*).

Lucian, de Dea Syria, ſays, that the Aſſyrians derived the temples and ſtatues of the gods from the Egyptians; but that antiently the temples of the Egyptians were without ſtatues (*p*). It is certain however that the worſhip of images in the form of men, and other animals, had obtained in Egypt and the neighbouring countries (*q*), before the days of Moſes, as appears from the prohibition of them in the ſecond commandment, and which is more particularly expreſſed, Deut. iv. 16, 17, 18. But ſtill there were ſeveral nations, that did not as yet, nor for a long time after, worſhip images. Such were the antient Perſians, for which we have the teſtimonies of Herodotus, Xenophon, and Strabo. Clemens Alexandrinus informs us, that the firſt image which was ſet up among them was a ſtatue of Venus, by Artaxerxes, who, as Dr. Shuckford probably conjectures, was Ochus, in the latter times of the Perſian empire (*r*). Bardeſanes, as quoted by Euſebius, ſays, that the Seres, a famous nation in India, had a law among them for-

(*o*) De Jure Nat. et Gent. lib. ii. cap. 6.

(*p*) Lucian. Opera, tom. ii. p. 657. Amſtel.

(*q*) According to Diodorus Siculus, the Egyptians began with the worſhip of the ſun and moon, and thence proceeded to worſhip the elements, the earth, water, fire, and air; and at laſt came to worſhip animals and reptiles. Thus idolatry ſtill grew and increaſed amongſt them. And the abuſe of the hieroglyphical characters and ſacred ſymbols, which were in early uſe in Egypt, contributed not a little to it. Thus under pretence of ſuperior wiſdom, the purity and ſimplicity of the antient religion became more and more corrupted.

(*r*) Shuckford ubi ſupra, p. 346.

bidding

bidding all worſhip of images. The ſame author obſerves concerning the Indian Brachmans, that according to a tradition derived from their anceſtors, they abſtained from image-worſhip (*s*). At what time images were firſt introduced among the Greeks we have no certain account. But the uſe of them probably came into Greece from Egypt. The moſt antient Greeks had no temples, but worſhipped in the open air. It is ſaid that Cecrops, who came from Egypt, firſt taught them to erect temples, and brought in the worſhip of hero-gods and images: and in this he was followed by others of their antient kings and legiſlators; and the number of their gods and goddeſſes, as well as the rites of their worſhip, were continually increaſing, and received conſtant additions from the fables of their poets and mythologiſts. As to Italy, the beſt writers of their antiquities agree, that the religion of the inhabitants in the moſt antient times was different in ſeveral reſpects from that which prevailed in Greece in the latter ages. And it is particularly obſerved by Varro concerning the antient Romans, that they worſhipped the gods without an image for more than one hundred and ſeventy years. And he adds, that if this had ſtill continued, the gods would have been worſhipped more purely. "Quod ſi adhuc manſiſſet, caſtiùs dii obſerventur;" of which he mentions the Jews as an example. Yea, he ſticks not to declare, that "they who firſt inſtituted images of the gods for the people, "both took away from the cities the reverence of the gods, and "added to the popular error." "Qui primi ſimulacra deorum

(*s*) Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. vi. cap. 10. p. 274, 275.

" populis poſuerunt, eos civitatibus ſuis et metum demiſſe, et " errorem addidiſſe (*t*)." To the ſame purpoſe Plutarch, in his life of Numa, obſerves, that " he forbad the Romans to repreſent " God under the form of man or beaſt; nor was there any graven " or painted image admitted among them formerly. But for the " ſpace of the firſt one hundred and ſixty years they built temples, " but made no ſtatue or image, as thinking it an impiety to liken " the moſt excellent things to thoſe that are mean and baſe; it " being not poſſible to apprehend or approach God, ἐφαπτίζεσθαι " θεῷ, but by the underſtanding (*u*)." But afterwards images were multiplied among them, as well as among the Greeks, and grew more and more in uſe in thoſe ages when learning and the arts flouriſhed. Their wiſe men and philoſophers pleaded for images as neceſſary helps to human infirmity; and the people carried it ſo far as to think that there could be no religion without images. Hence they looked upon thoſe nations which had no images as having no religion at all (*x*). And this was one of their principal objections againſt the primitive Chriſtians, who were all zealous enemies to image worſhip, that they had no altars or images: " nullas aras, nulla nota ſimulacra." Thus the learned

(*t*) Apud Auguſtin. de Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 31. p. 87.

(*u*) Macrobius ſpeaking of him whom he calls the higheſt God, affirms that antiquity formed no image of him. " Nullum ejus ſimulacrum finxit antiquitas." In Somn. Scip. lib. i. cap. 2.

(*x*) Lactantius, ſpeaking of the fondneſs of the Heathens for images, eſpecially thoſe that were adorned with gold and jewels, obſerves, " nec ullam religionem " putant, ubi illa non fulſerint," lib. ii. cap. 6.

and polite nations fell ſhort of ſome of the people whom they called barbarous, who in this and ſome other inſtances adhered more cloſely to the tradition of the firſt ages, and were ſtrangers to the refinements of human learning and philoſophy.

I had occaſion to take notice before of the praiſes beſtowed by Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus upon the religion of the firſt Romans. It appears from his account that in the moſt antient times of the Roman ſtate, when the people were eſteemed rude and illiterate, their religion had more of ſimplicity, and leſs abſurdity in it, than afterwards, when they had commerce with the learned Greeks, and philoſophy and the ſciences had made a great progreſs among them. Hence the ſatiriſt, comparing the antient with the latter times, obſerves, that they had not then ſuch a crowd of gods as they worſhipped afterwards.

" Nec turba deorum
" Talis ut eſt hodie, contentaque ſidera paucis
" Numinibus."

Juven. Sat. xiii. ver. 46, 47.

They incorporated more of the poetic fabulous theology into the civil or public religion than they had formerly done. It appears from the writings of the learned Varro, who flouriſhed in the latter times of the Roman republic, not long before the coming of our Saviour, that in his days their deities and ſacred ceremonies were multiplied to an amazing degree. So far is it from being true that they grew in the knowledge of religion, and in the pure

pure worſhip of the true God, as they grew in literature, that on the contrary they were ſtill more deeply immerſed in idolatry and polytheiſm. Rome became at length the receptacle of all kinds of idolatry, even of the Egyptian rites. Thus Lucan,

" Nos in templa tuam Romana recepimus Iſin
" Semideoſque canes."

Hence Tertullian upbraids the Romans, that notwithſtanding the high regard they profeſſed to have for their anceſtors, they had fallen off from thoſe of their inſtitutions, which had been rightly ordered. They reſtored the myſteries of Bacchus, which by a decree of the ſenate had been exterminated out of Rome and all Italy. The Egyptian deities, particularly Serapis, Iſis, Harpocrates, Cynocephalus or Anubis, which had been expelled the Capitol by the conſuls, and their altars overturned, were again admitted, and the higheſt honours paid them (*y*).

Thus it appears that the illiterate ages, by keeping more cloſely to the traditions derived to them from the moſt antient times, were free from ſome of thoſe corruptions which were introduced in the politer ages. Idolatry and polytheiſm continued to gather ſtrength in the midſt of learning and philoſophy. Not only the poets and prieſts, but the legiſlators and civil magiſtrates, many of whom were accounted wiſe men and philoſophers, had a great hand in this. Ariſtotle, in a paſſage above quoted from him, after

(*y*) Tertul. Apol. cap. 6. Opera, p. 7. B, C. Paris 1672.

having

having obſerved, that it had been delivered down from thoſe of the moſt antient times, both that the ſtars are gods, and that the Divinity containeth whole or univerſal nature, adds, That all the other things were fabulouſly introduced for the perſuaſion of the multitude, and for procuring obedience to the laws, and promoting the public utility: ſuch as the repreſenting the gods to be of human form, or like to ſome other animals, with other things of that nature, and which are conſequent upon theſe (z).

(z) Metaphyſ. lib. xiv. cap. 8. Oper. tom. ii. p. 1003. Paris 1629.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

A fourth general reflection. Human wiſdom and philoſophy, without a higher aſſiſtance, inſufficient for recovering mankind from their idolatry and polytheiſm, and for leading them into the right knowledge of God and religion, and the worſhip due to him. No remedy was to be expected in an ordinary way, either from the philoſophers or from the prieſts, or from the civil magiſtrates. Nothing leſs than an extraordinary Revelation from God could, as things were circumſtanced, prove an effectual remedy. The wiſeſt men in the Heathen world were ſenſible of their own darkneſs and ignorance in the things of God, and of their need of Divine Revelation.

THE ſeveral conſiderations which have been offered make it ſufficiently evident, how little was to be expected from human learning and philoſophy, for inſtructing mankind in the right knowledge and worſhip of the only true God, and for recovering them from the groſs idolatry and polytheiſm in which they were generally involved. What the apoſtle hath obſerved now appears to be undeniably true by fact and experience, "The "world by wiſdom knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21. If there had been no other remedy, we muſt have continued under the Pagan idolatry and polytheiſm unto this day.

It

It is an eaſy thing to ſpeak in high terms of what the light of nature and reaſon can lead men to, now that it has been ſo greatly refined and aſſiſted by the light communicated from the Chriſtian Revelation. Men that have been educated under the Goſpel, and who have acceſs to the diſcoveries there made, may purſue and improve thoſe diſcoveries, and then ſecurely boaſt of what mighty things they can do by the ſtrength of their own reaſon and penetration. But the proper way to know the true force of natural reaſon, and what may be expected from it when left to itſelf in the preſent ſtate of mankind, is to conſider what was done in matters of religion under the mere guidance of human reaſon, in thoſe nations and ages in which it was diligently cultivated, and when polite literature and the liberal arts were in their higheſt elevation. It would argue great arrogance in us to ſuppoſe, that we have a more comprehenſive reach of thought, greater penetration and force of reaſon, than thoſe ſublime genius's, which have been the admiration of all ſucceeding ages. Since therefore they with all their learning and vaſt abilities were at ſo great a loſs in what related to the knowledge and worſhip of the only true God, in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm, there is juſt ground to ſuppoſe, that if we had been left merely to ourſelves, and had not the benefit of Divine Revelation, we ſhould have been ſtill wandering in the mazes of error, even in matters of the higheſt conſequence.

The age when Chriſtianity firſt made its appearance in the world, was far from being an age of ignorance, if we ſpeak of human literature, and the improvements of the arts and ſciences.

But the nations that were otherwiſe learned and polite were ſunk into the moſt deplorable ignorance, darkneſs, and corruption in matters of religion. Now the queſtion ariſes, what was proper to be done to recover them out of this their wretched ſtate, to the right knowledge of God and of their duty? In ſpeculation it might be thought that human learning and philoſophy might alone be an able and ſufficient guide: there were among the Heathens men of wonderful abilities, who ſpent their lives in ſtudious enquiries, and made it their buſineſs to ſearch into the reaſon and nature of things; and many of them travelled to the moſt diſtant countries, and to the places then moſt celebrated for ſcience, in queſt of knowledge: and it might probably be ſuppoſed, that ſuch perſons by their inſtructions might reform the world, and reclaim them from their groſs ſuperſtitions and idolatries, and lead them into juſt notions of God and Religion. But was this the caſe in fact? Did they make any ſtand againſt the prevailing corruptions? Or work any reformation in the popular ſyſtem of polytheiſm? Far from it. If any of them had juſt and good notions, they wanted a divine authority to enforce their dictates. Their dogmas paſſed only for fine ſpeculations, or the opinions of this or that philoſopher or ſect of philoſophers, with which the people had little concern, and which therefore had but ſmall influence. Accordingly we find in fact, that the popular idolatry and polytheiſm, and the many abſurd and abominable rites of the Heathen ſuperſtition, ſtill kept their ground. Nor did the philoſophers ever convert ſo much as a ſingle village from idolatry. On the contrary, they patronized it by their maxims, and countenanced it by their practice. It is evident then that

whatever high opinion ſome have entertained of the Heathen learning and philoſophy, it was unable to reform a corrupt and idolatrous world. It had been tried for many ages. "Philoſophy," as Mr. Locke obſerves, "ſeems to have ſpent its "ſtrength, and done its utmoſt." And yet after all was found ineffectual. This furniſheth a plain and convincing proof that human reaſon, if left merely to itſelf without an higher aſſiſtance, is not a ſafe and ſufficient guide in divine matters, and holds out an obſcure and uncertain light: and that when men come to treat of theſe things in the fulneſs of their pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, and with a high conceit of their own wiſdom, they for the moſt part either throw off all religion, or ſtrangely corrupt and pervert its moſt important doctrines and principles. Reaſon may be, and has been, of great uſe, when under the conduct of Divine Revelation, and making uſe of the light which that affords: but when truſting to its own force it has affected an independency, and endeavoured to ſtrike out new paths, it has often made wild work in religion, and plunged men into atheiſm, ſcepticiſm, and infidelity on the one hand, or into idolatry, ſuperſtition, and numberleſs varieties of error on the other.

And if it was a vain thing to look for a reformation in religion from the philoſophers, from whom elſe could it be expected? Surely not from the prieſts, who were the great promoters of polytheiſm, and all the abſurd rites of the Pagan ſuperſtition. Could it be thought, that they would inſtruct the people to abandon that idolatry by which they maintained their own reputation and in-

tereſt? Or, would the lawgivers and politicians, and great men of the ſtate attempt it? If this was the deſign of the myſteries they inſtituted, it is plain they were of little efficacy to draw the people off from the common polytheiſm, nor indeed, as they were managed, could be expected to do ſo. The public laws in every city and country eſtabliſhed idolatry. Their moſt celebrated legiſlators interwove the worſhip of idol deities into their civil conſtitutions, and their ableſt political writers, who wrote about the beſt forms of government, confirmed it. It might perhaps be hoped, that when a philoſopher came to have the reins of government in his own hands, which was what Plato propoſed as the beſt expedient for regulating the commonwealth, and adminiſtering it in the fitteſt manner, theſe great abuſes would be rectified, and a better ſcheme of religion eſtabliſhed. Such was Marcus Antoninus, a great emperor, and an excellent philoſopher. But did he introduce a better form of religion, or a purer worſhip of the Deity? On the contrary, he himſelf obſerved the accuſtomed rites; he adored the popular deities, and even ſeemed zealous for the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition. And what other method could human wiſdom deviſe, to reform and recover mankind from their idolatry and polytheiſm, to the right knowledge and worſhip of God, but the doctrines of their wiſe men and philoſophers, the inſtructions of their prieſts, and the authority of the legiſlators and civil powers? And all theſe were found in fact and experience to be inſufficient. Muſt the people therefore be left wholly to themſelves, and their own natural notions? But theſe were corrupted to an aſtoniſhing degree; ſo that Cicero ſcrupled

not

not to ſay, that the light of nature no where appeared (*a*). And as to the broken remains of antient tradition concerning a Deity, a providence, and the world to come, which were originally owing to Divine Revelation, they became at length in a great meaſure defaced and overwhelmed with innumerable errors and ſuperſtitions. And indeed if men of the fineſt genius were at a loſs, what could be expected from the vulgar? It is evident, that taking mankind as they are, there was little ground to hope that they would ever, if left to themſelves, have been able to recover from their prejudices, and lay aſide thoſe corruptions, thoſe ſuperſtitions and idolatries, which had been for many ages received among their anceſtors, and eſtabliſhed by the laws, recommended and practiſed by their wiſe men and philoſophers, and which were at the ſame time calculated to gratify their ſenſual appetites and inclinations. Notwithſtanding all the aids of learning, the world ſtill grew more and more corrupted both in principle and practice, more and more addicted to the moſt abſurd ſuperſtitions and moſt abominable vices. And never were they both arrived to a greater height than at the time when our Saviour appeared (*b*).

After

(*a*) Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. iii. cap. 1.

(*b*) The learned Dr. Sykes, whom I have had frequent occaſion to quote, and who has ſhewn a high eſteem for the powers of reaſon, and a ſtrong prejudice in favour of the Pagan philoſophers, plainly aſſerts not only the uſefulneſs but the neceſſity of Divine Revelation, as things were circumſtanced in the Heathen world. He ſays, that " by the addition of very much abſurdity and folly, by the groſs " idolatries they had every where eſtabliſhed, by the abundance of fables they had " mixed with truth; by the apparent falſehoods they had embraced; and thro' " the great danger that every good man run, who ſhould venture to ſhew them " the pure truth; there was a *neceſſity* of a reformation, and of calling men back to " the true rule of action. How to remove the loads of rubbiſh, which by degrees

" had

After Chriſtianity had made ſome progreſs, endeavours were uſed to revive the credit of the Pagan philoſophy, and to raiſe it to a higher degree of reputation than before. Thoſe they called Eclectics, profeſſed to ſelect that which was beſt out of every ſect of philoſophers, and to form their principles into one body. The Alexandrian ſchool became famous, and it muſt be owned that in ſeveral things they exceeded thoſe that had gone before them, and were more explicit in their declarations of the unity of God, and advanced noble ſpeculations concerning the divine attributes and Providence: but there is great reaſon to think, that for this they were very much indebted to the light received from the Chriſtian revelation, though they were too proud to own it.

Euſebius acquaints us that there had been from the firſt age of the Chriſtian church a ſchool of ſacred learning erected among the Chriſtians at Alexandria, which continued to his time, and had been furniſhed with men eminent for their eloquence, and knowledge in divine things. He particularly mentions the celebrated Pantænus, as having preſided in that ſchool at the latter end of the ſecond century, and who had been bred up in the principles of

" had been thrown upon the beauteous fabric of truth, was more than the wiſeſt " mortal could tell, or dare to undertake? Every crevice was ſtopped by which " light might enter: and this made even Socrates declare, that he thought it " beſt to be quiet, and expect, till ſomebody ſhould come, and by a divine teach- " ing, remove the miſt from before mens eyes." Plat. Alcib. II. et Phæd. 11. See Sykes's Connection and Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 431, 432. And he had ſaid before that " error muſt *for ever* have prevailed, had not a me- " thod been found out to propagate truth againſt all the powers and authority " and influence of the men of this world." Ibid. p. 383.

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the Stoic philoſophy (*c*). Jerome gives the ſame account, and that he was ſucceeded by Clemens Alexandrinus, who was alſo a man of great learning, and extremely well verſed in the Pagan philoſophy (*d*). That eminent Alexandrian philoſopher Ammonius Saccas, ſo highly extolled by Porphyry and Hierocles, whom the latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans regarded as their father, and from whom they derived what they called the ſacred ſucceſſion, lived and died a Chriſtian, as both Euſebius and Jerome affirm, and this hath been the general opinion of the learned. Or, if we ſhould ſuppoſe with Fabricius that Ammonius Saccas was a different perſon from the Ammonius referred to by Euſebius and Jerome, yet ſtill, by Porphyry's own acknowledgment, he had been educated a Chriſtian under Chriſtian parents. And though Porphyry pretends, that when he came to years of underſtanding, and "had acquired a taſte of philoſophy, he betook himſelf to a life agreeable to the laws," i. e. embraced Heatheniſm, yet it ſeems reaſonable to believe, that as he was acquainted with Chriſtianity, he ſcattered many ſeeds of ſacred truth in his philoſophical lectures, originally derived from the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelations. He had both Chriſtians and Pagans in his ſchool; among others the admired philoſopher Plotinus, and the famous Origen, who, Porphyry tells us, was one of his hearers, and made a great proficiency in the knowledge of philoſophy under this maſter. The Pagan philoſophers that proceeded out of this ſchool blended the notions received from the holy Scriptures with the

(*c*) Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccl. lib. v. cap. 10.

(*d*) De Viris illuſt. cap. 38.

Pagan

Pagan theology and philoſophy, and thereby roſe in ſeveral inſtances to higher flights than their predeceſſors; and yet to ſhew how little was to be expected from the Heathen philoſophy in its utmoſt refinement, they made no attempts to recover the people from their idolatry and polytheiſm, but rather uſed all their credit and efforts to uphold declining Paganiſm, and deviſed the moſt plauſible colours to defend it. With this view they endeavoured to accommodate their philoſophical ſchemes to the Pagan religion, and to ſupport the one by the other. He that would form a juſt idea of the new philoſophy which they wanted to introduce, may conſult the learned Fabricius in his Prolegomena to the life of Proclus by Marinus.

I ſhall conclude what relates to the Pagan philoſophers with obſerving, that though undoubtedly they had an high opinion of their own wiſdom, yet the moſt eminent of them were ſenſible of the darkneſs, the ignorance, and uncertainty they were under, eſpecially in divine matters, and the great need mankind ſtood in of a divine revelation and inſtruction, to lead them into a right knowledge of God and religion (*e*). Something was offered con-

(*e*) See the learned Dr. Clarke's Diſcourſe on Natural and Revealed Religion under the ſeventh propoſition, p. 306. et ſeq. edit. 7th. Lord Bolingbroke in his animadverſions on this part of Dr. Clarke's book, owns that Plato inſinuates in many places the want or neceſſity of a Divine Revelation: but he will not allow that the opinion of Socrates, Plato, and other philoſophers, is any proof that the want was real. His exceptions to this have been elſewhere conſidered. View of the Deiſtical Writers, Vol. II. p. 63. edit. 3d. At preſent I ſhall only obſerve, that by his own acknowledgment thoſe great philoſophers were themſelves ſenſible of the need of Divine Revelation in the preſent ſtate of mankind. Bolingbroke's Works, vol. V. p. 214, 215, 216. 4to.

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cerning this before, p. 259. and p. 270. to which I refer the reader. I ſhall here ſubjoin ſome other paſſages to the ſame purpoſe. Plato at the latter end of his ſixth Republic obſerves, that "the ſame re- "ſpect which the ſun in the viſible world has to ſight, and the things "which are ſeen, the very ſame has the τὸ ἀγαθὸν, that which is "good [i.e. God] in the intellectual world to intellect and things "which are underſtood: that as the eyes, when looking at things "in the night, are almoſt blind, and as if they had no ſight at "all; but when turned to objects which the ſun ſhines upon ſee "them clearly, ſo it is with regard to the mind. When it ad- "heres to the τὸ ὄν, the Being which really is or exiſts, it under- "ſtands and knows, and appears to have intellect: but when it "turns to that which is mixed with darkneſs, and which is ge- "nerated and corruptible, it is carried about with various opinions, "and ſeems as if it had no underſtanding." Plat. Opera, p. 478, 479. Ficin.

In the dialogue called Theages, Plato introduces Socrates inſtructing a young man, Theages, whom his father brought to him to be taught wiſdom: and in the concluſion of that dialogue he intimates to him, that if his attempt to learn wiſdom were pleaſing to God, he would make a great proficiency in it in a ſhort time; if otherwiſe, not: and that he ſhould therefore apply to him by prayers and ſacrifices. Socrates ſeems there to have had the Delphian Apollo particularly in view, whom he elſewhere recommends: it appears however, from what he here ſays, how ſenſible he was of the need men ſtood in of a Divine aſſiſtance and inſtruction in order to the obtaining true wiſdom. The ſame

thing appears from that noted paſſage in Plato's ſecond Alcibiad, which is quoted at large by the learned Dr. Clarke (*f*). The purport of it is this: Socrates meets Alcibiades going to the temple to pray, and takes that occaſion to convince him, that he knew not what to pray for in a right manner: and that it was not ſafe for him to pray in the temple, till God ſhould diſpel the darkneſs of his mind, ſo that he might be in a capacity of diſcerning between good and evil. And when Alcibiades upon this ſaid, I think I muſt defer my ſacrifices to that time, Socrates anſwers, You have reaſon; it is more ſafe to do ſo, than to run ſo great a hazard. Socrates did not queſtion the propriety or neceſſity of worſhipping the Deity, as he ſhews on ſeveral occaſions; but he thought that a divine inſtruction and aſſiſtance was neceſſary to enable men to perform it in a proper manner (*g*). And therefore there is reaſon to conclude, that he would have accounted a well-atteſted Revelation, in which God ſhould declare his will concerning the worſhip to be rendered to him, an ineſtimable bleſſing. That great philoſopher Plutarch begins his tract De Iſid. et Oſirid. with ſaying, that "it becomes all perſons that have any "underſtanding to aſk all good things of the gods: but that "eſpecially we ſhould pray to obtain from them the knowledge "of the gods, as far as men are capable of attaining to it: ſince

(*f*) Ubi ſupra, p. 307.

(*g*) I ſhall here quote a paſſage from a very ingenious writer, and who is no way inclined to ſuperſtition, concerning the neceſſity of revelation for inſtructing men how to worſhip God in a right manner. "Il faut neceſſairement que Dieu ait or-"donnè un culte a l'homme.—Quel chaos affreux ne s'enſuivroit il pas, ſi cha-"cun avoit une penſée differente ſur le culte, qu'on doit a la divinitè! L'eſprit de "l'homme ſujet a s'egarer retomberoit bientot dans les erreurs de l'idolatrie." Lettres Juives, lettre 23.

"neither

" neither man can receive, nor God beſtow, any thing greater " and more venerable than truth." Where, allowing for the polytheiſtical manner of expreſſion, he plainly ſhews the ſenſe he had both of the importance of the knowledge of divine things, and that this knowledge muſt come to us from God. Iamblichus, in his life of Pythagoras, ſpeaking of the principles of divine worſhip, ſaith, " It is manifeſt that thoſe things are to be done which are pleaſing to God: but what they are it is not eaſy to know, " except a man were taught them by God himſelf, or by ſome " perſon who had received them from God, or obtained the " knowledge of them by ſome divine means (*b*)." Indeed all the latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Hierocles, Proclus, &c. though enemies to Chriſtianity, owned the neceſſity of divine illumination, or a revelation from God, to lead men into the knowledge of divine truth, and an acceptable way of worſhipping the Deity. But they did not make a right uſe of this principle. Inſtead of embracing the Revelation which God had really given, and which was confirmed by the moſt illuſtrious divine atteſtations, they ſought to be initiated into the myſteries of the gods in ſeveral parts of the world, and applied themſelves to what they called Theurgy, which had in it a mixture of magical ceremonies, and by which they propoſed to obtain an intimate intercourſe and communication with the gods. But in a little time the vanity of their pretenſions became manifeſt to all, and the world heard of them no more.

(*b*) Iambl. in Vit. Pythag. cap. 28.

CHAP. XXII.

The fifth and laſt general reflection. The Chriſtian Revelation ſuited to the neceſſities of mankind. The glorious change it wrought in the face of things, and in the ſtate of religion in the world; yet accompliſhed by the ſeemingly meaneſt inſtruments, in oppoſition to the greateſt difficulties. It was given in the fitteſt ſeaſon, and attended with the moſt convincing evidences of a divine original. How thankful ſhould we be for the ſalutary light it brings, and how careful to improve it! What an advantage it is to have the Holy Scriptures in our hands, and the neceſſity there is of keeping cloſe to the ſacred rule there ſet before us, in order to the preſerving the Chriſtian Religion in its purity and ſimplicity.

THE ſtate of religion in the Pagan world being in that deplorable condition which hath been deſcribed, and it having appeared from experience, after a long trial, that human wiſdom and reaſon, if left to itſelf, was inſufficient to recover and reform mankind, it pleaſed God in his great goodneſs to grant a Revelation from heaven, which was deſigned to be publiſhed to the Heathen nations, and confirmed by the moſt convincing evidences of a divine authority. It was by a Revelation from God that religion in its principal fundamental articles was at firſt communicated to the human race; and when they had almoſt univerſally fallen from it, there was need of a new Divine Revelation, all other methods having been found ineffectual. It is true, that the Revelation contained in the writings of Moſes and the Pro-

Prophets, was excellently fitted to ſet thoſe to whom it was made known right, in what related to the knowledge and adoration of the one living and true God, the great Creator and Governor of the univerſe, in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm: and it has been ſhewn that in this reſpect it was of great advantage not only to the Jews, but to many of the Gentiles among whom they were diſperſed, and who thereby had an opportunity given them of being convinced of the impiety and abſurdity of the common idolatry. But then it muſt be conſidered that the Jewiſh Revelation was immediately promulgated to one particular nation, and fitted in a ſpecial manner for their uſe; and that nation was by many peculiar rites and uſages kept diſtinct from all others. This, though neceſſary at that time and in that ſtate of things, for valuable purpoſes (*i*), yet contributed to render them unpopular, and to create a prejudice againſt them in other nations. To which it may be added, that there were ſome things of importance for men to know, the full diſcovery of which was by the Divine Wiſdom reſerved for a ſubſequent Revelation, which in its original frame and intention was deſigned for univerſal uſe, and to be publiſhed to all nations. And indeed the whole Jewiſh œconomy was ſo contrived as to prepare the way for that more perfect diſpenſation which was to ſucceed it. Its rites and ordinances were

(*i*) Without thoſe peculiar diſtinctive rites, the Jews would probably have been confounded with other nations, and involved in the common idolatry to which for a long time they were very prone. But when they were fully eſtabliſhed in the worſhip of the one true God in oppoſition to all idolatry, and the appointed time was come for introducing that laſt and moſt perfect diſpenſation of religion, to which the Jewiſh œconomy was deſigned to be preparatory, thoſe diſtinctive rites, which were as a partition wall between Jews and Gentiles, were to be ſet aſide, that they might all be one in Chriſt Jeſus.

not

not only accommodated to the time then preſent, and to that ſtate of the church, but ſome of them were originally intended to be preſignificative of good things to come, which were to be accompliſhed in the fitteſt ſeaſon. There had been all along a tradition preſerved among the people of Iſrael, derived to them from the earlieſt ages, concerning a glorious perſon, whoſe coming was to be of univerſal benefit, and in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed. This tradition ran through their ſacred writings, and was the ſubject of many expreſs predictions. Not only was it declared, that he was to proceed out of their nation, but the particular tribe, and even the houſe and family from which he was to ſpring, the place of his nativity, and the time when he was to make his appearance in the world, were diſtinctly pointed out. He was alſo deſcribed by many remarkable characters, ſome of them ſeemingly inconſiſtent with each other, which yet in him were all punctually fulfilled. It was clearly and expreſly foretold, that through him the Heathen nations ſhould be converted from their idolatry and polytheiſm, and brought to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God; that the Gentiles ſhould receive his law; that in him ſhould they put their truſt, and that the idols ſhould be aboliſhed. The predictions concerning him were delivered by different perſons, at different times, and in divers manners, through a long ſucceſſion of ages. Things being thus prepared, at the time which had been marked out by thoſe prophecies, a Divine Perſon appeared, in whom all theſe characters were wonderfully united, and which never met together in any other. This yielded a peculiar kind of atteſtation to him, never equalled in any other caſe. Beſides which, his Divine Miſ-

ſion was demonſtrated by a ſeries of aſtoniſhing miracles, which he performed, and enabled his diſciples to perform in his name; as alſo by his reſurrection from the dead and aſcenſion into heaven, and by the unparalleled effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt in his extraordinary gifts and powers upon his diſciples, and thoſe that believed on him, as he himſelf had promiſed and foretold. This was the glorious and admirable Perſon, by whom it pleaſed God to make the moſt perfect Revelation of his will to mankind. It could not poſſibly be ſent by a more illuſtrious meſſenger, or whoſe divine miſſion was atteſted and confirmed by more convincing evidence. And the Revelation he brought from heaven was ſuch in every reſpect as the ſtate of the world required. He exhibited the moſt pure and perfect rule of moral duty in all its juſt extent, which was then much wanted, and which he enforced by the moſt powerful ſanctions, and by a divine authority, at the ſame time giving the moſt perfect example of univerſal holineſs and goodneſs in his own ſacred life and practice. He alſo made the fulleſt diſcoveries of the general judgment, and of the important retributions of a future ſtate, the notions of which were greatly obſcured and defaced through the corruption of mankind, and the falſe reaſonings of men pretending to wiſdom and philoſophy. And whereas the whole world was become guilty before God, and obnoxious to his juſt wrath on the account of their apoſtaſy from him, and their many aggravated tranſgreſſions, he came in the name of God to reveal the counſels of his wiſdom and love for reconciling ſinners to himſelf. He gave the fulleſt aſſurance of the remiſſion of all their ſins to the truly penitent, and that God would in his rich grace and mercy, through the

Redeemer

Redeemer whom he had appointed, crown their ſincere though imperfect obedience with a bleſſed reſurrection and eternal life. And that this grace of God might not be abuſed, the moſt awful puniſhments were at the ſame time denounced againſt thoſe that ſhould obſtinately perſiſt in a courſe of preſumptuous ſin and diſobedience. Theſe were things of the higheſt importance to mankind, and proper matter for a Divine Revelation. But that which my preſent ſubject leads me eſpecially to conſider is, that the Chriſtian Revelation was admirably fitted to recover the nations from that ignorance of God, that idolatry and polytheiſm in which they were ſo generally involved, to the right knowledge and pure adoration of the only true God, the great Creator and Governor of the world. The cleareſt diſcoveries are there made of his infinite majeſty and incomparable perfections, of his having created this vaſt univerſe by the Word of his power, of his governing Providence as extending to all events, and eſpecially of his moral excellencies and attributes, his holineſs, goodneſs, juſtice, and truth. Theſe diſcoveries are of ſuch a nature as have a manifeſt tendency to lead men to form the moſt juſt and worthy notions of God, and to inſpire them with holy affections and diſpoſitions towards him, a ſuperlative love, a pious and profound fear and reverence, an unreſerved ſubmiſſion to his authority, and reſignation to his will, and an ingenuous truſt and affiance in him.

To make us farther ſenſible of the advantages which the Goſpel-Revelation brought to mankind, let us conſider that the Heathens are repreſented in Scripture as having been under the power of Satan.

Satan. Notwithſtanding the diſcoveries made to them both by antient tradition, originally derived from Divine Revelation, and by the works of Creation and Providence, they had revolted from the knowledge and worſhip of the one living and true God, and by this their apoſtaſy from God had in effect put themſelves under the power of that apoſtate ſpirit, and the evil angels his aſſociates. In the former part of this work full proof was given that in the Pagan world worſhip was paid to evil beings conſidered as ſuch (*k*). We are aſſured by the authority of St. Paul, that the "things which the "Gentiles ſacrificed they ſacrificed unto dæmons;" and the word is generally taken in a bad ſenſe in the ſacred writings (*l*). The ſame thing is ſaid by Pagan authors of the beſt credit. Plutarch expreſly aſſerts, that many of the rites of worſhip, uſual among the Heathens, ſeveral of which he mentions, were deſigned to placate and gratify evil and malignant dæmons. And particularly he charges thoſe as evil dæmons, to whom human ſacrifices were thought to be acceptable. And it admits of an eaſy proof, that there were ſcarce any of the Heathen deities to whom ſuch ſacri-

(*k*) See above, chap. v. p. 148, et ſeq.

(*l*) Origen expreſſes the general ſenſe of the primitive Chriſtians, when he declares, that "the worſhip of thoſe called gods is the worſhip of dæmons.—For all "the gods of the nations are dæmons—θεραπεία δαιμόνων θεραπεία τῶν νομιζομένων "θεῶν. πάντες γὰρ οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια." This is taken from Pſalm xcv. 5. according to the Septuagint, and all the antient Chriſtian writers apply this paſſage of the Pſalmiſt to the Heathen deities. Origen goes on to obſerve, that "the Chri-"ſtians ſhun the worſhip of dæmons as pernicious and deſtructive, ὡς ὄλεθρον." And adds, "we ſay that all that which is called among the Greeks the worſhip of the "gods, and which they ſolemnized by altars, ſtatues, and temples, is the worſhip "of dæmons—δαιμόνων δὲ θεραπείαν εἶναι φάμεν πᾶσαν τὴν νομιζομένην παρ' Ἕλλησι παρὰ "βωμοῖς καὶ ἀγάλμασι καὶ ναοῖς θεῶν θρησκείαν. Contra Celſ. lib. vii. p. 378."

fices were not offered, not excepting Jupiter the chief of them. Several oracles might be mentioned, which expreſly demanded human ſacrifices. So alſo did the Sibylline oracles on ſeveral occaſions, which the Romans held in the greateſt veneration (*m*). And indeed ſuch ſacrifices continued to be offered even in the civilized nations of Greece and Rome, at leaſt on ſome ſpecial occaſions, till the coming of our Saviour, and for ſome time after (*n*).

Porphyry, whoſe oppoſition to Chriſtianity, and attachment to Paganiſm is well known, goes ſo far as to pronounce Serapis the chief of the Egyptian deities, and whom the people worſhipped as the higheſt God, to have been the prince of the evil dæmons (*o*). That learned philoſopher, as was obſerved before, ſays, that evil dæmons were very deſirous to have divine worſhip and ſacrifices rendered to them: and he not only acknowledges that they were worſhipped, but endeavours to juſtify that practice, as neceſſary for averting their wrath, and obtaining from them worldly good things. The ſame Porphyry, as cited by Euſebius, produces an oracle of Apollo preſcribing ſacrifices to be firſt offered to an evil dæmon, to prepare the way for being admitted to an immediate ſight of the deity (*p*). To deſtroy this kingdom of Satan erected among the Gentiles, to aboliſh the worſhip of their idol-deities, and erect the viſible kingdom and pure worſhip of the one living and true God among men, was one glorious deſign of the Goſpel.

(*m*) Plutarch. Rom. Quæſt. Quæſt. 83. Oper. tom. ii. p. 284. A. Francof.

(*n*) See a fuller account of this above, chap. vii.

(*o*) Apud Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iv. cap. 23.

(*p*) Ibid. lib. iv. cap. 20.

of

of Jeſus. In this, as well as in other reſpects, it was certainly true, that " for this purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted that " he might deſtroy the works of the devil." 1 John iii. 8. For this end he commiſſioned his Apoſtles to go " preach the Goſpel " to all nations, and to turn them from darkneſs unto light, and " from the power of Satan unto God." Acts xxvi. 17, 18. A mighty deſign this to be executed by ſuch ſeemingly mean and feeble inſtruments! But ſo it was ordered, that " the excellency " of the power might appear to be of God, and not of men." 2 Cor. iv. 7. The uſurped empire and dominion of Satan, founded in idolatry and polytheiſm, ſeemed to be firmly eſtabliſhed in the Heathen world. It had ſtood for many ages, and had long preſcription to plead: it had the prejudices of the people on its ſide (*q*): and was ſtrengthened and upheld by the power and authority of the magiſtrates, by the arts and ſubtilty of the politicians,

(*q*) What regard was had to the tradition of their anceſtors, and the religion of their country, not only among the vulgar Pagans, but among the philoſophers themſelves, and how prophane and impious a thing it was accounted to call it in queſtion, or ſo much as to aſk a reaſon for it, appears from a remarkable paſſage in Plutarch's Amatorius. When one of the company, whom he calls Pemptides, deſires to be informed on what account Love came to be made a deity, another of the dialogiſts, who bears a principal part in the converſation, and who ſeems to expreſs Plutarch's own ſentiments, gravely ſays to him; " you ſeem to me to have attempted " to ſtir things which ought not to be moved with regard to the opinion con- " cerning the gods, when you demand a reaſon and demonſtration for every thing " in particular. For the faith of our forefathers and of our country is ſufficient " for us, than which we cannot utter or invent a more evident argument.—For " this is a foundation and baſis common to all piety; and if once its firmneſs and " eſtabliſhed rule be diſturbed and ſhaken in any one inſtance, it becomes uncertain " and ſuſpected in all *." This way of thinking and talking was a bar to all at-

* Plutarch. Oper. tom. II. p. 758. Francof. 1620.

cians, the craft and influence of the idolatrous prieſts, and the learning and eloquence of the philoſophers and wiſe men of this world. It was interwoven with the civil conſtitution, and regarded as eſſential to the proſperity and happineſs of the ſtate. It was guarded with all the powers and all the terrors of the world on the one hand, and all its pomps and allurements on the other; and came recommended by every thing which was apt to flatter men's vices and their paſſions, their ambition and ſenſuality. And yet no ſooner were the firſt publiſhers of the Goſpel ſent forth, in the name and by the ſpirit of a crucified Jeſus, but Satan's viſible empire received a ſenſible ſhock. Never was there a more ſudden and glorious change than Chriſtianity wrought ſoon after its firſt appearance in the world. Thouſands were every-where turned from idols to ſerve the living and true God, delivered from the power of darkneſs, and tranſlated into the kingdom of his dear Son. The old idolatrous worſhip and the long-adored deities fell into contempt: the idol temples ſoon began to be in a great meaſure forſaken, and the boaſted oracles, whereby the nations had been ſo long kept under the power of deluſion, were ſtruck dumb (*r*). Inſtead of the many gods and many lords which were acknowledged and adored among the Heathens, they were now brought

tempts for the reformation of the Pagan religion. Every endeavour of this kind was looked upon as a high degree of impiety and prophaneneſs. A manifeſt proof what difficulties Chriſtianity at its firſt promulgation had to encounter with, both from the learned and the vulgar.

(*r*) That the oracles were ſilenced about or ſoon after the time of our Saivour's appearing, may be proved from expreſs teſtimonies, not only of Chriſtian but of Heathen authors. Lucan, who writ his Pharſalia in the reign of Nero, ſcarce thirty years

brought in great numbers to acknowledge and adore "one God "the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one "Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things, and we by him." Inſtead of the many abſurd and impious rites of the Pagan worſhip, they were inſtructed to worſhip God, who is an infinite ſpirit, in ſpirit and in truth, in a pure and ſpiritual manner. Many there were who in every place lifted up to God pure and holy hands, and offered up to him, through the great Mediator of his own appointment, the ſpiritual ſacrifices of prayer and praiſe. The light of the Goſpel ſpread far and wide with a wonderful ſwiftneſs even in the firſt age; ſo that St. Paul repreſents it as having gone into the whole world, Col. i. 6. 23. Rom. x. 18. And this was what our Saviour himſelf expreſly foretold, at a time

years after our Lord's crucifixion, laments it as one of the greateſt misfortunes of that age, that the Delphian oracle, which he repreſents as one of the choiceſt gifts of the gods, was become ſilent.

"Non ullo ſæcula dono
"Noſtra carent majore Deûm, quàm Delphica ſedes
"Quod ſileat." Pharſal. lib. v. verſ. 111.

In like manner Juvenal ſays,

"Delphis oracula ceſſant,
"Et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri." Satyr. vi. verſ. 544.

Lucian ſays, that when he was at Delphi the oracle gave no anſwers, nor was the prieſteſs inſpired. See his Phalaris, Oper. tom. i. p. 745. Amſtel. This likewiſe appears from Plutarch's treatiſe, Why the Oracles ceaſe to give Anſwers; from whence alſo it is manifeſt, that the moſt learned Heathens were very much at a loſs how to give a tolerable account of it. Porphyry, in a paſſage cited from him by Euſebius, ſays, "The city of Rome was over-run with ſickneſs, Æſculapius and "the reſt of the gods having withdrawn their converſe with men: for that ſince "Jeſus began to be worſhipped, no man had received any public help or benefit "from the gods *."

* Apud Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. lib. v. cap. 1. p. 179.

when

when nothing could be more contrary to all human probability, Matt. xxiv. 14. Tacitus ſpeaks of a "huge multitude— multi-"tudo ingens," of Chriſtians at Rome, in a paſſage where he diſcovers the ſtrongeſt prejudice againſt them; and he alſo gives an account of a great variety of torments and ſufferings, to which, through the cruelty of Nero, they were expoſed (s). This happened in a little more than thirty years after our Lord's paſſion. And it appears from Pliny's celebrated epiſtle to Trajan, written about ſeventy years after the ſame great event, how numerous the Chriſtians were in his time. He ſays, there were many of all ranks and ages, both men and women, who profeſſed themſelves Chriſtians: that the contagion of this ſuperſtition had ſpread not only through the cities, but the towns and country villages: that the temples had been almoſt left deſolate, the holy rites and ceremonies had been long neglected, and that very few would buy the ſacrifices. He ſhews the ſtrength of his prejudices againſt Chriſtianity by calling it a wicked and immoderate ſuperſtition; and yet gives a noble teſtimony to the innocency of their manners; and makes the ſum of their fault or error to conſiſt in this, that they were wont to meet on a ſtated day before it was light, and to ſing hymns to Chriſt as to a God, and to oblige themſelves by an oath not to commit any wickedneſs, but to abſtain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to keep faith, and to reſtore any pledge that was intruſted to them. He alſo bears teſtimony to their fortitude and conſtancy, which he calls inflexible obſtinacy; and that it was ſaid, none who were true Chriſtians can be compelled to offer wine or frankincenſe to the gods, or to blaſpheme

(s) Tacit. Annal. lib. xiv.

Chriſt

Chriſt (*t*). Juſtin Martyr, who lived pretty early in the following age, ſays, in a paſſage cited before, that there was no part of mankind, whether Greeks or Barbarians, among whom prayers and thankſgivings were not offered to the Father and Maker of the univerſe in the name of a crucified Jeſus.

This wonderful change in the face of things, and in the ſtate of religion in the Heathen world, was brought about by the preaching of the Goſpel, "God bearing witneſs" to the firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity "with ſigns and wonders, and divers mi-"racles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will," Heb. ii. 4. Theſe were the viſible tokens of a divine interpoſition, and awakened the attention of mankind to behold and adore the power and majeſty of the only true God. They ſaw all the pretended wonders of their idol deities infinitely outdone. They ſaw the firſt preachers of the goſpel, though in themſelves weak and contemptible to all outward appearance, and deſtitute of all worldly advantages, endued with ſuch power from on high, that they not only performed the moſt extraordinary works, manifeſtly tranſcending the power or ſkill of any man, or of all the men upon earth, but evil ſpirits were ſubject to them in the name of Jeſus. Theſe were facts not done in a corner, but in the open view of the world, and of enemies ſtrongly prejudiced againſt them. Satan was as it were led in triumph by our Saviour, who gave even his ſervants power over him. In contemplation of this our Lord expreſſeth himſelf thus, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from "heaven," Luke x. 18. He had pretended to have his throne in

(*t*) Plin. Epiſt. lib. x. epiſt. 97.

heaven,

heaven, and to arrogate divine honours. But now he was caſt down from his aſſumed divinity, and a viſible church or kingdom was erected to God in thoſe nations where Satan had erected a kingdom of darkneſs before.

Upon the whole, the Chriſtian Revelation was made known to the world at a time when it was moſt wanted; when the darkneſs and corruption of mankind were arrived at the height, and there were but few traces of the antient primitive religion remaining among the nations. If it had been publiſhed much ſooner, and before there had been a full trial made of what was to be expected from human wiſdom and philoſophy, the great need men ſtood in of ſuch an extraordinary divine diſpenſation would not have been ſo apparent. It might have been ſaid, that it was introduced in illiterate and uncultivated ages, which was a ſuſpicious circumſtance. Beſides, it would have been deprived of the great advantage ariſing from the preparatory Jewiſh œconomy, and from a ſeries of illuſtrious prophecies continued for many ages, all pointing to that wonderful perſon who was appointed by the divine wiſdom and goodneſs to be the great Teacher and Saviour of mankind. To which it may be added, that the Chriſtian revelation made its firſt appearance at a time when the Roman empire had brought the greateſt part of the known world under its dominion. It was firſt publiſhed among the nations belonging to that empire, which was then the moſt knowing and civilized part of the earth, and from whence it might moſt conveniently be propagated to other nations. Accompanied with the moſt illuſtrious and convincing proofs and evidences of a divine power, preſence,

and glory, and carrying in it remarkable internal characters of truth, goodneſs, and purity, it ſoon made a ſurprizing progreſs, notwithſtanding the ſeemingly unſurmountable obſtacles it had to encounter with (*u*), till at length the whole ſyſtem of Paganiſm, which ſeemed ſo ſtrongly eſtabliſhed, and which had prevailed for ſo many ages, fell before it. This religion hath extended very far, and if Chriſtians had been duly careful both to preſerve it in its purity, and to propagate and recommend it by their inſtructions and example, to which they are bound by the ſtrongeſt obligations, it would probably before now have been univerſally known and diffuſed. What farther extraordinary means it may pleaſe God in his great wiſdom and goodneſs to make uſe of for diffuſing and eſtabliſhing true religion in the world, we cannot tell. But ſomething of this kind we are taught to expect by ſeveral paſſages of Scripture, which ſeem plainly to refer to a future general converſion of the Jews to the Chriſtian faith, and to the bringing in the fulneſs of the Gentiles (*x*). And whenever this ſhall happen, it will diſcloſe a ſurprizing ſcene, which will fill us with a pleaſing aſtoniſhment, and tend mightily to illuſtrate the glory of Divine Providence.

(*u*) The difficulties and obſtacles Chriſtianity had to ſtruggle with are repreſented in an elegant and ſtriking manner by Mr. Weſt, in his excellent "Obſervations on "the Hiſtory and Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt."

(*x*) The ingenious author of the Lettres Juives, ſpeaking in the perſon of a Jew, acknowledges the piety and zeal of the firſt Nazarenes, who ſhed their blood to draw mankind from idolatry; and that if the unity of God is known throughout the whole world, it is to them that it is principally owing. "Il faut avouer que c'etoi-"ent de grands hommes qui verſerent leur ſang pour retirer les hommes de l'ido-"latrie: et ſi l'unitè de Dieu eſt connu dans l'univers entier, c'eſt a eux a qui on "eſt ſingulierement redevable."

In the mean time let us be thankful to God for the advantages we enjoy by the Goſpel for religious and moral improvement. "How great and admirable," ſaith Euſebius, "ſhould the Goſpel "of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt appear to us, which inſtructs the "whole race of mankind to worſhip with becoming thoughts and "devotion the God and Lord of the ſun and moon, the Creator of "the whole world, and who is himſelf above and beyond the "univerſe: to praiſe and celebrate not the elements of bodies, "but the Diſpenſer of life, of food, and of all good things: and "in no wiſe to worſhip the viſible parts of the world, or any thing "that is perceivable by the fleſhly ſenſe, ſince every ſuch thing is "of a corruptible nature; but to adore that Mind alone, which "being in itſelf inviſible is preſent in all theſe things, and is the "Architect both of the whole univerſe and every part of it, and "which, ſhewing forth the wonderful virtue and greatneſs of its "Divinity, in all things both in heaven and in earth, governeth "the whole world in a manner not to be perceived by our ſenſes, "and by reaſons of wiſdom which no language can expreſs (*y*)!"

In order to our making a right uſe of the advantages we enjoy by the Goſpel Revelation, let us ſet a high value on the Holy Scriptures, and adhere to them as the great rule of our faith and practice. They are acknowledged by all Chriſtians to be of divine authority. They contain the original Records of our holy religion, and of the revelation that was brought from heaven, as delivered in its primitive purity and ſimplicity by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles. If we would form a juſt idea of Chriſtianity, free

(*y*) Euſeb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. iii. cap. 6. p. 96, 97. Paris 1628.

from

from all the additions and corruptions which were afterwards brought into it, we muſt carefully conſult thoſe divine oracles. Happy would it have been for the Chriſtian church, if they had all along kept cloſe to that ſacred rule. They would not then have fallen into thoſe groſs corruptions in doctrine, worſhip, and practice, which have created prejudices in the minds of many againſt Chriſtianity, and from which infidels have taken occaſion to form their moſt plauſible objections; though in reality theſe things cannot be juſtly charged upon the religion of Jeſus as delivered in the Holy Scriptures. It is however the mighty advantage of a written Revelation, that by an impartial conſulting it the deviations from it may be detected, and things may be again reduced to the original ſtandard. By means of the Scriptures, even the vulgar themſelves may be ſufficiently inſtructed in the moſt important articles of religion, and may be provided with a proper remedy, both againſt the impoſitions of deſigning men, and againſt idolatry in all its forms, though covered over with the moſt ſpecious pretences. Euſebius juſtly reckons it among the advantages for which we ought to have a high eſteem for the Goſpel Revelation, that thereby books and doctrines, which contain rules of conſummate virtue, and tend to form the manners to true piety, are delivered to men, women, and children, and are publicly read and explained for the uſe of all (*x*).

If we have now the knowledge of the only true God, if not only men of great learning and deep ſpeculation, but thouſands of the people in Chriſtian nations have a juſter notion of God, of his

(*x*) Præpar. Evangel. lib. v. cap. 1. p. 181.

Providence, and of the worſhip that is due to him, in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm, than even the wiſe men and philoſophers among the Pagans, to what can this ſo properly be aſcribed, as to the light of Divine Revelation which ſhineth amongſt us? How thankful therefore ſhould we be to God, and how deſirous to ſhew forth his praiſes and virtues, who hath, in his grace and mercy, called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light! Surely we ſhould regard the having the Holy Scriptures in our hands as the greateſt and moſt valuable of all our privileges. And it highly concerneth us to endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by walking in a holy exemplary converſation, becoming the Goſpel of Chriſt. And the obligations we are under to do this will farther appear, if it be conſidered, that we are thereby not only inſtructed in the right knowledge and worſhip of the only true God in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm, but we have alſo a perfect rule of moral duty ſet before us in all its juſt extent, and enforced by a divine authority, and by the moſt powerful and engaging motives; and that we have alſo the fulleſt diſcoveries there made to us of a future ſtate of retributions, and the great important realities of an unſeen eternal world. And that in both theſe reſpects the nations ſtood in great need of an extraordinary Divine Revelation, eſpecially about the time of our Saviour's appearing, is what I propoſe to ſhew in the remaining part of this work.

The END of PART I.

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TO THE

FIRST VOLUME.

☞ *The Letter* N. *refers to the Notes at the Bottom of the Page.*

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N.

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O.

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275. The antient philoſophers divided into two main ranks. Some of them excluded a divine mind and intelligence from the formation of the univerſe, 276, 277. Others aſcribed it to a moſt wiſe and powerful mind, 282—yet theſe were defective in what relates to the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, and encouraged polytheiſm, 283, et ſeq. Few, if any of them, acknowledged God to be in a proper ſenſe the Creator of the world, 305, et ſeq. They held the eternity of matter, ibid, et 307. and after Ariſtotle, they generally held the eternity of the world both as to matter and form, 311, 312. The later Platoniſts and Pythagoreans taught that the world proceeded eternally from God in a way of emanation, which naturally led to the Spinoſan ſcheme, 310. 313. Many of the philoſophers taught that God is the ſoul of the world, or that the whole animated ſyſtem of the world is God, 313, et ſeq. This was the doctrine of the antient Egyptians, 315—of Varro, 316—of the Bramins, ibid.—and eſpecially of the Stoics, 317, et ſeq. The pernicious conſequences of this notion ſhewn, 322, et ſeq. It was uſed to juſtify the Heathen polytheiſm in worſhipping the ſeveral things of nature, and parts of the world, as gods, or parts of God, 322. The Pagan philoſophy was ſo managed as to lay a foundation for their polytheiſm and idolatry, 324, 325. The greateſt and beſt of the Heathen philoſophers, in their moſt ſerious diſcourſes, ſpoke of a plurality of gods, whom they recommended to the adoration of the people, 328, et ſeq. When they ſet themſelves to prove the being of a God, and a Providence, they proceeded on the ſuppoſition of a plurality of gods, 331, et ſeq. They referred the people for inſtruction in religious matters to the prieſts and to the oracles, 349. It was a general maxim among them, that every man ought to conform to the religion of his country, 355. When they took upon them the character of legiſlators, polytheiſm, and not the worſhip of the one true God, was the religion they endeavoured to eſtabliſh, 357, et ſeq. they employed their learning and abilities to defend the worſhip of a plurality of deities, and pretended this was an honour to the Supreme, 366. Inſtead of diminiſhing the number of deities, they added a multitude of phantaſtic and metaphyſical deities to the popular ones, 368. N. They juſtified the worſhip of images, 368. and undertook to colour over the abſurdeſt part of the Pagan theology, by allegorizing the moſt indecent fables, 369, 370. They apologized even for the Egyptian animal worſhip, which many of the other Pagans ridiculed, 370, 371. Some of the moſt refined philoſophers were againſt all external worſhip of the Supreme God, 374. Their notions of Providence conſidered. See *Providence*. They made new efforts, after Chriſtianity appeared, to ſupport the credit of declining Paganiſm, 470. For this purpoſe they made alterations in their philoſophy, and borrowed ſeveral things from the Holy Scriptures, but ſtill endeavoured to uphold the Heathen polytheiſm, 471, 472. The beſt of the philoſophers acknowledged their own darkneſs, and were ſenſible of the need they ſtood in of a Divine Revelation.

and

and inſtruction, 472, et ſeq. Some of them pretended to extraordinary communications with the gods, but they and their pretences fell into contempt, 475. See alſo, 259.

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Pliny the Younger—his teſtimony to the virtue and conſtancy of the primitive Chriſtians, 486.

Plotinus—and the latter Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, after Chriſtianity appeared, continued to plead for the divinity and worſhip of the ſun and ſtars, 103. He taught that the world is a god, and that the ſun and other ſtars are gods, as being animated by a divine ſoul, 324—and pretended that the worſhipping many gods is an honour done to the Supreme, 366. What he ſays of the Platonic firſt principle obſcure and unintelligible, 373. N.

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Poets, Heathen—kept up the antient tradition of one Supreme God; but corrupted it by confounding him with their Jupiter, the chief of their idol-deities, of whom they made ſuch indecent repreſentations, 87, et ſeq. They were the prophets and chief inſtructors of the people, 125. 161—looked upon even by Socrates and Plato as divinely inſpired, 162, 163—blamed by Dr. Cudworth for perſonating and deifying the inanimate parts of the world and things of nature, which produced a vaſt number of gods and goddeſſes, 164. But this is alſo juſtly chargeable on the philoſophers, ibid. See alſo 324. Both the poets and philoſophers made the Pagan theology look too ariſtocratically, 347, 348.

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Potter, Dr.—His Antiquities of Greece referred to for an account of the Grecian rites and feſtivals, 160. 186, et ſeq.

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Puffendorf—ſuppoſes the chief heads of natural religion and law to have been originally communicated by Divine Revelation to the firſt parents of mankind, 5.

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END of the FIRST VOLUME.



The author's great distance occasioned more errors of the press than would otherwise have appeared; though I must do Mess. RICHARDSON and CLARK the justice to acknowledge, that many of them were not owing to any negligence on their part, but to mistakes in transcribing the Manuscript for the Press. Care however is taken to rectify them in the following account of the Errata.

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